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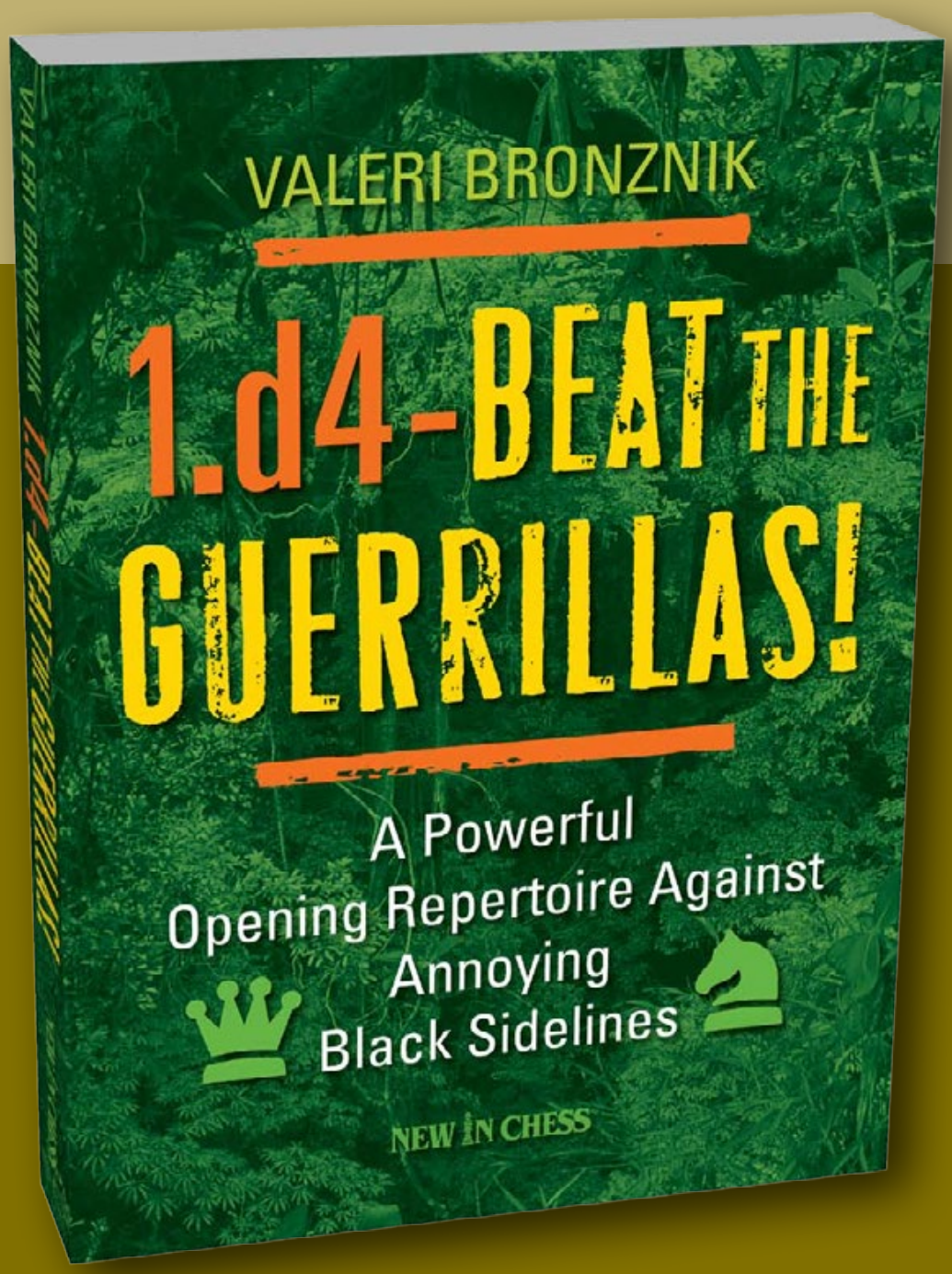

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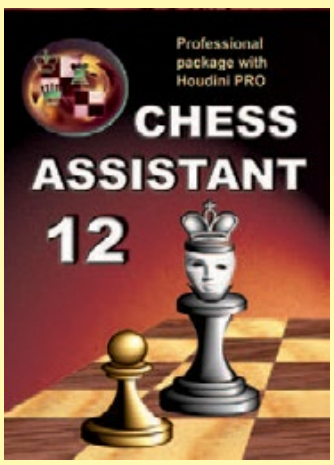

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2011 Issue 7

NEW IN CHESS

PUBLISHER: Allard Hoogland EDITORS-IN-CHIEF: Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam, Jan Timman

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Seemingly against all odds, Magnus Carlsen refused to think about anything else but first place when after only four rounds he was trailing Vasily Ivanchuk by 7 points in the Grand Slam Final. That was when the big chase started.

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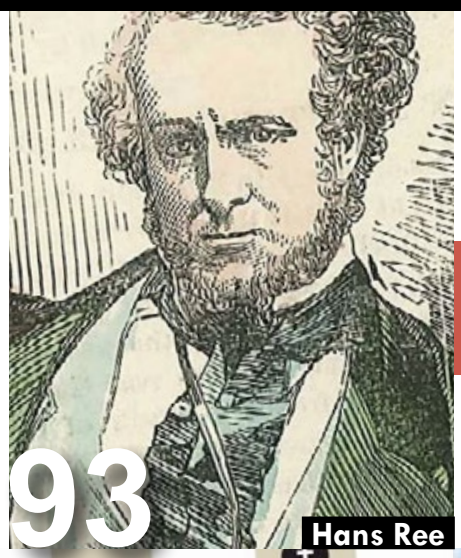
'I'm sure that as soon as I say out loud that my second spring has finally come (or third? or what are we up to now?), it will end precisely at that moment', says the 35-year-old winner of the 2011 World Cup.

'Every now and then I manage to achieve the feeling of being (one with the universe – and Donovan) totally immersed in the position, and seeing everything very clearly – something that in other sports is often referred to as "in the zone" – and it happened here.' – Peter Svidler



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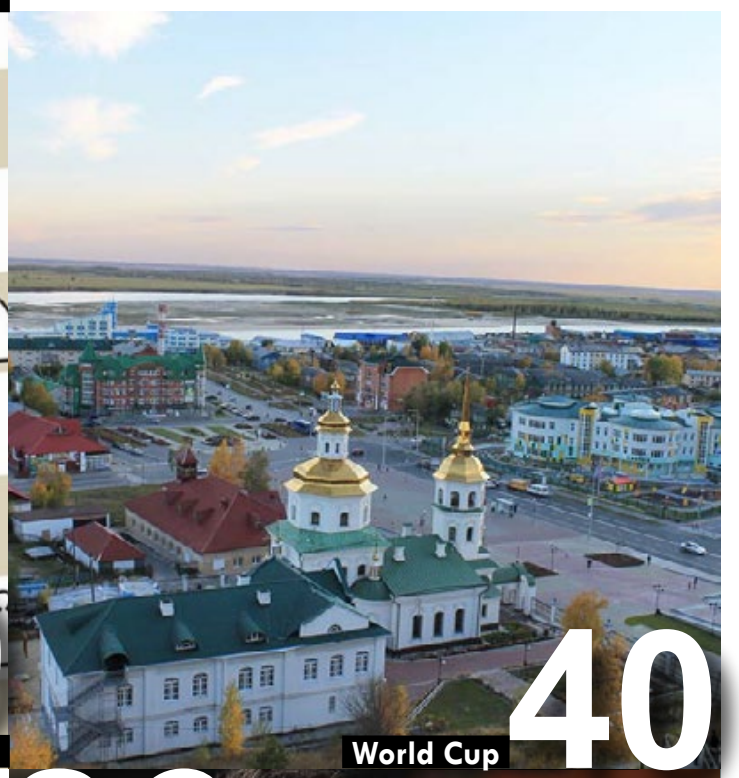

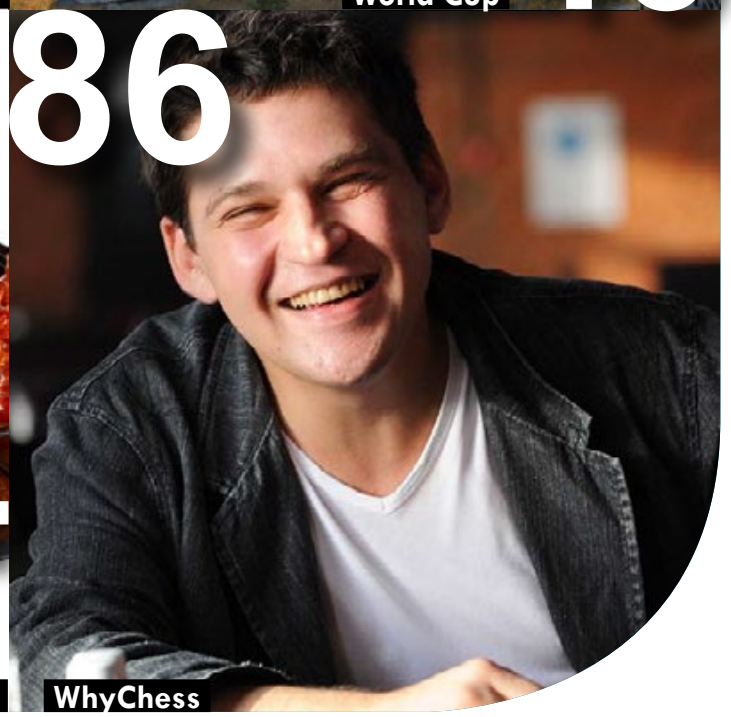

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The Russian Chess Federation celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Mikhail Botvinnik with a long weekend of festivities, the main act being a rapid exhibition tournament with the four best players on the planet that was won with superior ease by World Champion Vishy Anand.

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Jan Timman made two of them in one tournament and presents them with lucid comments.

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COVER PHOTO
Peter Svidler: New In Chess

NIC's Café

Last Call

When he arrives at the chess board, Magnus Carlsen usually treats the photographers and spectators to a standard routine. He stretches and yawns, gulps down a swig of orange juice or drowsily looks around him as if he is wondering who it was that woke him up so early. This is why no one really understood what was happening last year at the start of the 9th round in Wijk aan Zee before his game against Vladimir Kramnik. Slumping in his chair Carlsen closed his eyes, froze like a statue, and didn't open his eyes for two minutes that felt like an eternity. When he finally returned to the world, he briefly looked at the board and pushed his queen's pawn to d4. Afterwards, speculation about what had happened was rife. At first, Kramnik joked that he thought his opponent had fallen asleep and that he toyed with the idea of waking him up, but at the press conference he opined that Kasparov, with whom the Norwegian was working at the time, had probably told him to play 1.e4 and that in the end he decided to go for 1.d4. From the book *Smarte Trekk, Magnus Carlsen, Verdens Beste Sjakkspiller* ('Clever move, Magnus Carlsen, the best chess player in the world', we believe) by Norwegian journalist Hallgeir Opedal, we now know that Kramnik's theory was not entirely correct, but was certainly a clever guess. And having talked to Carlsen's father Henrik we feel that we can now present a pretty accurate account of what happened. It is true that Carlsen was thinking about his opening move, and his plan had indeed been to go 1.e4, but just before the game Kasparov had called him and told him not to play it, as he had discovered a hole in the variation they had prepared. With this call Kasparov ignored an urgent plea from the Carlsens not to call before games, as this put unpleasant pressure on Magnus. But it was not only the pressure that confused him. At the board, Carlsen sat wondering what the hole in the variation could be, a detail Kasparov had declined to reveal to him.

NEW IN CHESS

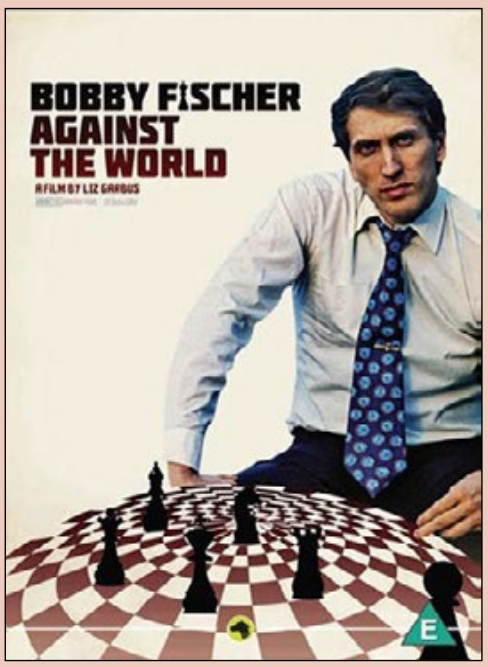
Magnus Carlsen 'asleep' before the fated game against Vladimir Kramnik in Wijk aan Zee 2010.

A fragment of the new book published in Norwegian newspapers put great emphasis on what Magnus allegedly told his father after the tournament: 'Get me out of this!' Closer to the truth was that after Wijk aan Zee Magnus wanted to revise the contract with Kasparov. His first impulse was to have a lighter version of their cooperation. Then, having thought it over, he indicated that he wanted the option of working together with no obligations. When Opedal summed it up for him saying, 'So essentially you told your father: "Get me out of this!"' Magnus replied, 'That's how you could put it.'

Henrik Carlsen stresses that the talks they had with Kasparov about the new situation were entirely friendly and constructive and that his son remains highly grateful for the experience he had gained from their cooperation. In fact, their shared wish was to continue on a less regular basis, but certainly to stay in touch. In the following months Kasparov returned to Oslo for two brief sessions. They also met in New York and London, and they spoke on the phone once or twice. In fact, there was no real reason for the cooperation to finally fizzle out. Carlsen kept the possibility of a next session at the back of his mind, but one way or another he felt that he had learned a lot and was ready to take on more responsibility himself. He shared first place in Amber and when he won Bazna with plus-5 without a training session, he didn't feel the urge to have a summer session in Croatia. Once he had skipped this, their cooperation gradually and naturally came to an end.

Don't Miss It

While watching the London riots in Tottenham on TV last August, we didn't necessarily think that they might have an effect on us. But in fact they did. How could we know that one of the warehouses that went up in flames contained the review copies of Liz Garbus' film *Bobby Fischer against the World*? As a result, we could only watch her masterpiece after a considerable delay. But who cares? As they say, a thing of beauty is a joy forever. And indeed it is a great film, as various reviewers pointed out in other publications that we saw in the meantime. However, one facet that we feel was neglected was the incredible research behind the film. Over the years we have seen a lot of Fischer, both in photographs and film, but this film shows such a wealth of 'unknown' material that we can only hope there is a special Grammy, or some other prestigious film award, for research.



Once again, it's a great film. We know that the end is sad, but don't miss it.

Berserkers

Amongst the various people that are being interviewed in Liz Garbus' film is, of course, Gudmundur Thorarinsson, the organizer of the Fischer-Spassky match in Reykjavik. In 1972 Gudmundur was an adventurous young man who, as president of the Icelandic Chess Federation, made a dream come true. After the match he continued to play a role in the chess scene of

Striking similarity: the Siglunes and Lewis berserkers.

his country, and not surprisingly he was on the committee that managed to free Fischer from his Japanese jail and enabled the American's second coming to Iceland. In recent times Gudmundur has been preoccupied with a new project: he wants to prove that the Lewis chessmen, the majority of which reside in the British Museum, were most probably made in Iceland. His theory was given a boost by the recent find of a chess piece in Siglunes, Iceland, that bears an uncanny resemblance to the 'berserker' of the Lewis chessmen. According to Gudmundur Thorarinsson, we don't know of any other nation, except for Iceland (after this find), where the rooks are berserkers (or soldiers). Moreover, we know from old manuscripts that the Icelanders used bishops as chess pieces between 1150 and 1200, the time that scholars agree on that the Lewis chessmen were made. Last August there was a symposium in Iceland on the origin of the Lewis chessmen and the debate rages on. Scientists from different countries are not yet convinced by Thorarinsson's theory, but we're inclined to say: why not?

Berserker

These days the Nordic people no longer invade foreign nations, and no longer go berserk in the process. Therefore it must come as quite a shock to them when a foreigner goes on the rampage on their soil. At the Oslo Open in Norway, Matthew Sadler demonstrated that despite having been absent from professional chess for more than a decade, he still knows the ropes, scoring 8 out of 9, with a performance rating of 2860. As the Englishman, who lives and works in the Netherlands, also comfortably won a strong Open in Barcelona last August, the automatic question is whether he is considering picking up his old trade again? The professionals may rest assured; he still loves chess, but he intends to stick to his job and will limit his chess activities to the occasional outing.

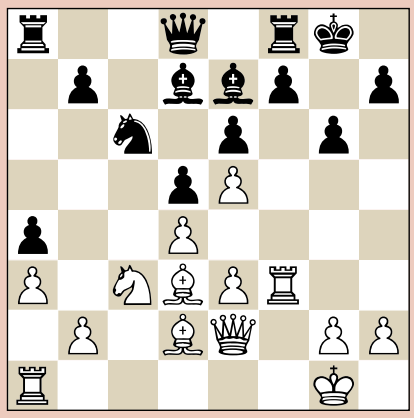
One crucial mistake the Norwegians made was to hold the tournament in a football stadium. Among the trophies on the walls were photos of legendary wins, including their victory over England in 1981. Sadler is a peaceful man, but he's only human as well!

SL 11.11 – D10
Matthew Sadler
Sipke Ernst
Oslo 2011 (5)

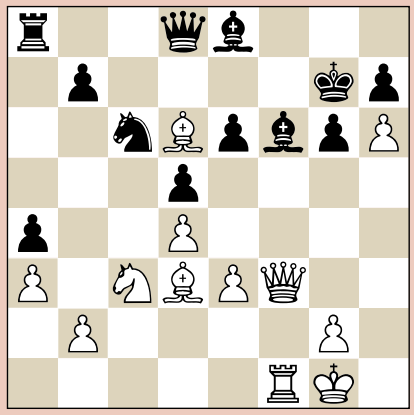
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e3 ♗f5!? 5.cxd5 cxd5 6.♕b3 ♗c8 Regularly played by French IM Eric Prié. Black claims that the tempo losses don't do him any harm. **7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.♘e5 e6 9.f4 ♗e7 10.♗d3 0-0 11.0-0 ♘d7 12.♗d2 ♘dxe5 13.fxe5 ♗d7** This is rather slow. It was more sensible to play 13...f6 immediately. **14.♖f3 ♘b4!?** 14...f6 is now very risky: 15.exf6 ♗xf6 16.♘xd5! exd5 17.♕xd5+ ♔h8 18.♕h5 g6 19.♗xg6 ♕e7 20.♖af1 and wins. **15.♗e2!** To activate the rook on a1. **15...a5 16.a3 a4 17.♕d1 ♘c6 18.♗d3!** It's back!

Matthew Sadler seeking his revenge for Norway-England 1981 (2-1).

And the threat of ♗xh7+ is hanging in the air. **18...g6 19.♕e2**



19...f6 20.exf6 ♖xf6 21.♖af1 ♔g7 22.♗e1! ♖xf3 23.♕xf3 ♗f6 24.♗g3 ♘a5? A blunder, but the position was already very difficult. **25.♗c7 ♕e7 26.♗d6 ♕d8 27.♗c7 ♕e7 28.♗d6 ♕d8 29.h4! ♘c6** Both 29...h5 and 29...♗e8 run into 30.♗e5!. **30.h5 ♗e8 31.h6+**



And in view of 31...♔xh6 32.♗f8+ ♗g7 33.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 34.♕f8 mate, Black resigned. ■

Your Move

More Aronian Please

I'd like to say that Levon Aronian's annotations to his game against Sergey Karjakin, Ningbo 2011, in New In Chess 2011/6 were wonderful!

His comments were clear, concise, courteous and insightful. One of his notes that impressed me the most was after 48... ♕h8: 'As shown by a detailed analysis, which I will not give here in order to avoid tiring the reader, in this case White's position is more won than in the game.' Such respect for the reader and not just flaunting his ego or trying to prove anything. Also, and this may easily go unnoticed – not a single punctuation mark after any moves, even those that may have been dubious or blunders. I think this shows respect for his opponent and modesty. I hope you seek his annotations for your magazine first and foremost. Thank you.

Jeremy Knox
Fairfax, Virginia, U.S.A.

Editorial postscript

Thanks for the compliment, which we have forwarded to Levon Aronian. Your request is fulfilled on page 82.

Weinstein and Kronsteen

I always enjoy New In Chess articles that provide some history about the game and its players, especially the less well-known people who nevertheless were famous in their time. I had never heard of Boris Weinstein before reading Genna Sosonko's article in New In Chess 2011/6, but his story seemed very familiar. Sosonko writes that Weinstein worked for the NKVD and 'many people believed that he only worked there, but in reality he lived a different life'.

It suddenly clicked for me that he must have been the role model for Ian Fleming's fictional evil chess master, Kronsteen, who devises the gambit plan to kill James Bond in *From Russia with Love*. Fleming wrote in his introduction that, while the plot was fiction, he had accurately described the workings of Russian intelligence, including the personalities of their top personnel. Of course, in Fleming's story, Kronsteen is killed by his superiors because his plan failed whereas Weinstein was allowed to retire. A pity that he never wrote his memoirs, but probably many people are glad he didn't. Thanks for revealing some of the truth.

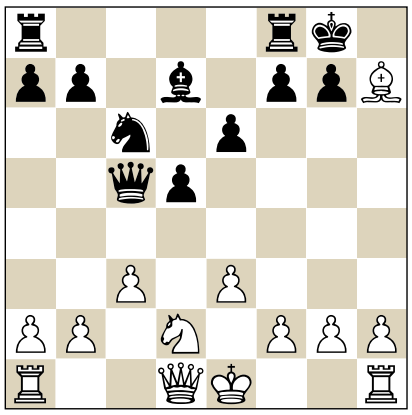
Roy Kiewe
Baltimore, MD, USA

It's only over when...

Congrats – once again! – for your splendid magazine!

Luke McShane is doing a great job in his book-reviewing column, yet in New In Chess 2011/5 he makes a mistake.

Reviewing J. Edwards' book *Sacking the Citadel*, he gives the game Prié-Svetushkin, France 2009, and writes (after 20.h4): 'White has a powerful attack, and went on to win.'



Prié-Svetushkin
Châlons-en-Champagne 2009
position after 13.♗xh7+

In fact, this game, played in the French League (Top-16), ended in a draw, after 62 moves (although the MegaBase stops it at move 35 and wrongly gives 1-0 – which must have caused the mistake). By a funny coincidence, Prié-Svetushkin is given in full in *Kingpin* Nr. 40 (the magazine that McShane writes very positively about in that same issue of New In Chess!), with Grandmaster Tony Kosten calling the move 13.♗xh7+! 'The novelty of the century'!!

Spiros Ilandzis
Athens, Greece

Averbakh's Memoirs – Some Puzzling Omissions

It was late in 1960 and Adelaide, the capital city of South Australia, was enjoying fine spring weather with perfect conditions for the hosting of its undoubtedly most important and strongest chess tournament ever. The 1960 Australian Chess Championship, with a field of players which included most of the very best masters of Australian chess. Amongst them Cecil Purdy, the first world correspondence champion and Australian champion, and his great rival Garry Koshnitsky, also a past Oz champion. And heading the post-World War II European migrant phalanx was Lucius Endzelins, a former Latvian chess master and GM in correspondence chess (2nd in world correspondence championship 1956-59).

This illustrious ensemble was further enriched by an unprecedented participation of two Soviet masters: GM Yuri Averbakh and the then young Russian super-talent Vladimir Bagirov. Their appearance was a political sensation since it was a time of belligerent confrontation between East and West, with Australians fighting in the Vietnam war. There is little doubt that Australian and Soviet governments had agreed to engage in a chess version of 'ping-pong diplomacy', enabling Averbakh and Bagirov to obtain visas and play in Australia. To this day it is not known who was primarily responsible for the successful negotiation and outcome of this event.

As can be expected the tournament created great interest in Australia, particularly in Adelaide. The Russian players were very popular, especially

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amongst female students of Russian literature. Averbakh at the time was 38 years old. He was tall, suave and dapper, while Bagirov was only 24, still a student and bubbling with enthusiasm when I introduced him to my university colleagues. The tournament was played in the splendid reading hall of the State Public Library, with 15 rounds and a proviso that the title of Australian Champion was to be awarded to the highest placed Australian competitor.

Indeed, with two rounds left to play it seemed certain that Koshnitsky would win since he was leading by a full point. 'Kosh', as he was affectionately known in Oz chess circles, had already drawn with Averbakh, and won convincingly against Bagirov (see game below), but it was not to be. He lost both games, with the end result being that Averbakh won the tournament with 14/15, Bagirov was runner-up with 12/15 and third was Endzelins, who won the title as the highest placed Australian player.

A highly amusing incident occurred during the game between Averbakh and Purdy. Averbakh, playing white, had his rook on the b1-square bearing down the empty file to b8. Purdy castled long, with his queen's rook crossing the b8-square. Averbakh immediately lodged a protest, claiming the move was illegal. It took considerable persuasion by Purdy and the arbiters to assure him that the move was entirely legal! How can a grandmaster omit such a chess anecdote from his memoirs (that were published this year by New In Chess)!?

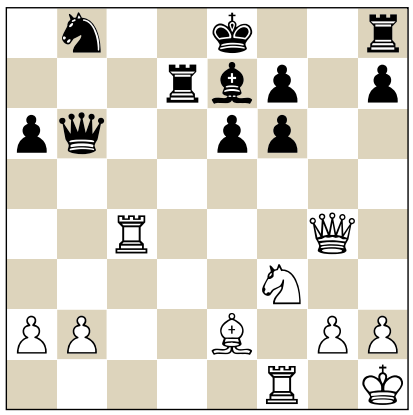
Averbakh's popularity and chess presence in the Australasian region continued. He again visited Australia in the mid-1960's and then advanced his diplomatic mission in New Zealand by playing in the 1966/67 Canterbury Chess Club Centenary in Christchurch. The tournament was a 14-rounds Swiss which Averbakh won with 13/14, followed by Rudolfo Cardoso 11½ (Philippines), and Paul Dozsa 11 (Australia).

It is puzzling why Averbakh has entirely omitted any reference to his successful chess forays and diplomatic accomplishments in Australasia, the very first Soviet grandmaster to do so. Surely this cannot be attributed to his memory loss or ruthless editing by New In Chess publishers!?

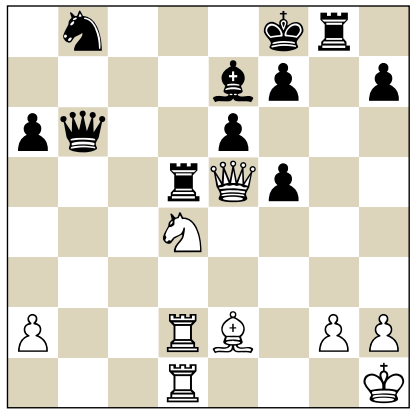
Yuri Averbakh has, to his credit, greatly influenced an entire generation of creative Australian chess players who were in their student years when he came to Australia. To name just some: Doug Hamilton (who later became multiple Australian champion), Bob Krstic (recently Australian Seniors champion), Terrey Shaw (top scorer in the 1968 Lugano Olympiad), and the legendary group of 'Unquenchables', myself included.

Vladimir Bagirov (1936-2000)
Garry Koshnitsky (1907-1999)
Australian Championship,
Adelaide 1960

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 b5 8.e5 dxe5 9.fxe5 ♕c7 10.exf6 ♕e5+ 11.♗e2 ♕xg5 12.0-0 ♖a7 13.♕d3 ♖d7 14.♘e4 ♕e5 15.♘f3 ♕c7 16.♕e3 ♗b7 17.c4!? bxc4 18.♖ac1 ♗xe4 19.♕xe4!? gxf6 20.♖xc4 ♕b6+ 21.♔h1 ♗e7
White has sacrificed a pawn for the initiative. **22.♕g4**



22...♕xb2! Why not! **23.♘d4 ♔f8! 24.♖d1 ♖d8! 25.♖c2 ♕b6 26.♕e4 f5 27.♕e5 ♖g8 28.♖cd2 ♖d5!** Black is getting on top so White sacrifices again.



29.♘xe6+!? fxe6 30.♖xd5 exd5 31.♕xf5+ ♔g7 32.♗d3 ♕g6!
Kosh defends well. **33.♕xd5 ♕g5 34.♕e4 ♕h4 35.♕e5+ ♗f6 36.♕c7+ ♔h8 37.♖f1 ♗g7 38.♖b1 ♕d4 39.♕g3 ♘d7 40.♗xa6 ♘c5 41.♕a3 ♘e4 42.g3 ♘xg3+ 0-1**
(taken from *Australian Chess Forum*, November 1999, No.10)

Boris Kazanski
Berlin, Germany/Sydney, Australia

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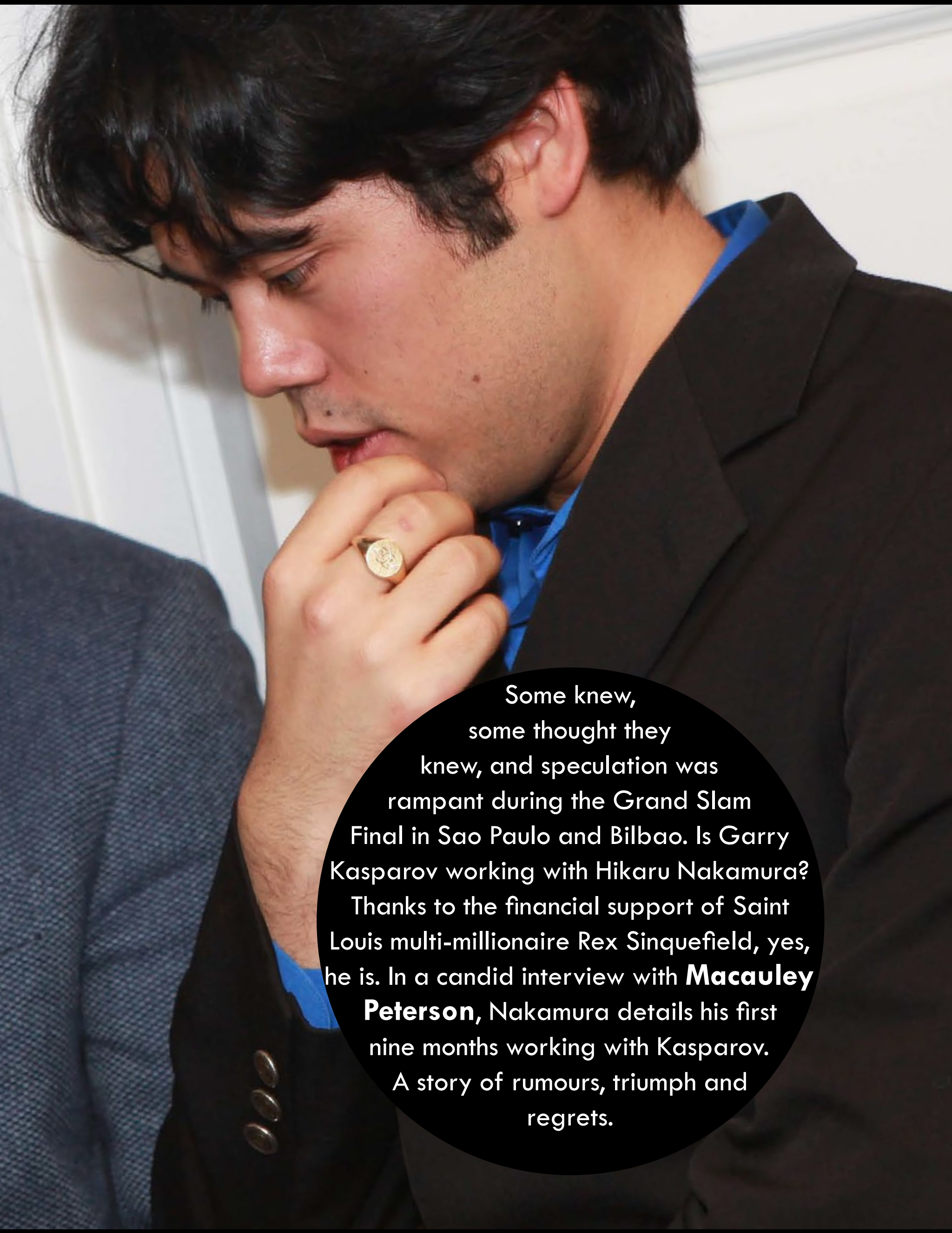
Hikaru Nakamura

Garry Kasparov and Hikaru Nakamura have a friendly chat at the Saint Louis Chess Club on November 29, 2010, one day before the former World Champion had a meeting with Rex Sinquefield with far-reaching consequences.

The Spirit of Saint Louis

SAINT LOUIS CHESS CLUB



Some knew,
some thought they
knew, and speculation was
rampant during the Grand Slam
Final in Sao Paulo and Bilbao. Is Garry
Kasparov working with Hikaru Nakamura?
Thanks to the financial support of Saint
Louis multi-millionaire Rex Sinquefield, yes,
he is. In a candid interview with **Macauley Peterson**, Nakamura details his first
nine months working with Kasparov.
A story of rumours, triumph and
regrets.

Hikaru Nakamura

Grandmasters tend to dislike interviews in the middle of major tournaments, so it was somewhat surprising when, shortly after his long flight from Brazil to Spain, Hikaru Nakamura contacted me to set one up. He had played solidly during the first half of the 4th Grand Slam Final, and was in clear second place. Rumours of a new partnership bubbled up to the surface the day before the first round, credible enough to prompt a question from Leontxo Garcia in an official post-game interview.

Nakamura's wry reaction? No comment, but you can believe what you want.

It's hard to keep a secret in the chess world, especially in the Internet age, when unnamed sources cited on a blog open the window just enough to beg interesting questions like 'Is Kasparov working with Nakamura?' Who knows? But it sure is fun to wonder! Hikaru's non-denial in Sao Paulo was as good as confirmation for those primed to believe.

Within hours of landing in Bilbao on October 4th, I found us a table at the café of the *Museo de Bellas Artes*, a pleasant outdoor spot a few minutes walk from the elegant Hotel Melia, the home to Grand Slam participants. I was mildly apprehensive – it had already been months since I became certain of what was now quickly becoming known in wider chess circles: yes, Nakamura *is* working with Kasparov.

To suspect is one thing, knowing is quite another, but getting the story straight from the protagonists is always more telling.

'The beginning of it would have been last December when, right before the London Classic, I got an e-mail from Rex, and he sort of wrote it in a cryptic way where he said he had spoken with Kasparov, and there's something that he wanted to talk to me about. It didn't reveal any specifics, but I sort of just put two and two together.'

A week earlier, Kasparov had given talks in Saint Louis and Kansas City as part of a speaker series hosted by the Show Me Institute, a Missouri think tank. President of its board of directors is Rex Sinquefield who, along with his wife Jeanne, founded and sponsors the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis.

On the plane between cities, Kasparov praised Nakamura, and suggested that Sinquefield finance a training relationship similar to his work with Magnus Carlsen. Rex didn't hesitate to endorse the idea and, after consulting his wife, e-mailed Hikaru. 'I intimated it was not inexpensive, but otherwise I didn't get involved', he told me in mid-September.

> 'To work with, at least what I consider to be, the greatest chess player ever, is sort of an opportunity you can't turn down.'

Sinquefield has been an enormously generous and enthusiastic sponsor of American chess over the past several years, funding the U.S. Championship and other events at the Chess Club and, most recently, re-launching the World Chess Hall of Fame. Rex was also a backer of Anatoly Karpov's FIDE presidential campaign, and he is a great admirer of Kasparov, who he describes as 'a remarkably accomplished, energetic and highly dedicated person'.

In addition to his vast experience as World Champion, Kasparov's year spent training Carlsen was important to Sinquefield. 'It's basically a turn-key solution, you know he's been teaching Magnus, so it was pretty easy to say yes to.'

Sinquefield told Kasparov to contact Hikaru and work out a plan. Kasparov went to London for the end of the Chess Classic and took Nakamura aside before the private dinner at Simpson's in the Strand, on December 15th.

'I knew right away that I would definitely take up the offer simply because there are certain times – certain opportunities you have in life just don't come around that often, and certainly having the opportunity to work with, at least what I consider to be, the greatest chess player ever, is sort of an opportunity you can't turn down.'

He doesn't know the details of the contract between Sinquefield and Kasparov – the specific cost remains private – and Nakamura thinks it's better that way.

The first training session, just before the Tata Steel tournament in Wijk aan Zee, was held in New York at Kasparov's $3.4 million dollar penthouse apartment on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

For Nakamura, it's convenient to meet there since he gets to visit his parents, who live just north of the city in White Plains. Flights to Europe from Seattle and Vancouver, where he used to live, rarely entail a stop in New York.

Kasparov wanted to keep the col-

laboration secret for as much as a year, if possible. Nakamura didn't feel strongly about this, but went along with it.

'With Magnus there were always rumours, and then it came out eventually, and I think he sort of wanted it to be the same way with me as well, where sort of keeping it secret is better because it potentially gives you an edge. I personally don't actually think that it does, but I can understand the logic.'

It's funny how small details loom large with the passage of time. I can recall clearly chatting with Hikaru in London, before dinner at Simpson's, when Kasparov gregariously joined in the conversation. This was odd – he barely knew me and, with so many old and new friends around, why would he engage with Hikaru quite so ostentatiously? It was also curious that they left together in a taxi, alone.

This newfound camaraderie did not go unnoticed by Magnus Carlsen's father Henrik, who was also present, and later said his earliest inkling came at the same event. After Nakamura's impressive victory in Wijk aan Zee, Kasparov's effusive praise in the *New York Times* was a second clue.

Looking back at the Tata Steel tournament, Nakamura saw several ways in which that first training session helped him, ranging from specific analysis to overall confidence.

'I had just started working with Garry so everything was a lot fresher at the start than it is, let's say, even now, so it was a big confidence boost. I felt great during the whole event and I think it's, in many ways, why I won that tournament.

'A lot of the openings that I played there were very much because of the training session which we had in New York... I was playing a specific variation of the Nimzo [Indian Defence], I was playing this ♘c3 and ♘f3 in at least three or four of the games – I know I won my first round game against Grischuk. I also played it against Anand and Ponomariov as well. So, it's a combination – it was the database and also it was the training session in New York.'

SAINT LOUIS CHESS CLUB

The main characters in an exciting new chapter in American chess: Rex Sinquefield, Garry Kasparov and Hikaru Nakamura.

The database he refers to is the collected works of Kasparov and his team over the years, which includes some 17,000 heavily annotated games. In any given opening, Nakamura already has the best lines at his fingertips.

Late into the closing party at the Zeeduin Hotel, in Wijk aan Zee, Nakamura first let slip the news about his new 'database' in the hole. Euphoric over his historic +5 win, Hikaru suddenly suggested to Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam that they step outside for a moment. Standing in the cold sea air, as in a cheap spy movie, he thought for a second, looked up and said, 'I am working with Kasparov.'

The following morning Nakamura came down to Earth, and asked for secrecy, realizing the time was not yet ripe to reveal the news. An unfortunate change of heart (for how long?), but then again, without the details, you have a headline, not a story.

Curiously, they had not been *completely* alone the night before – a spy movie needs a spy after all, and Carlsen's friend Johannes Kvisla, who has travelled with Magnus to tournaments on several occasions, appeared to have followed them outside. The secrecy might only have lasted five minutes, were it not for the fortunate fact that, as the Carlsens later told us, Johannes had overheard nothing (I said it was *cheap* spy movie, didn't I?).

So when did the world's elite players actually learn of this latest high-powered collaboration? It's hard to know for sure, but it was sooner than you might expect.

'Probably around the time of Monaco, the Melody Amber Blindfold and Rapid Tournament... I think since then. The chess world, it's a very small world and a lot of people talk to each other.

'I think both Garry and myself both told certain people, I mean it's inevitable...To elaborate a little bit further, I don't think it was so much from my play, but I think it was the results that

I had, especially in Wijk, which a lot of people didn't expect.'

Vladimir Kramnik has good sources, or so it seems. In Monaco, after losing to Nakamura in a King's Indian Defence, one of Kasparov's theoretical specialties, he told World Champion Anand what 'everyone knows' (according to Kramnik): his great predecessor was back in the fray. Anand relayed the news with playful indignation, 'If everyone knows, at least someone could have told *me*!'

Back in Saint Louis, Sinquefield mused, 'a true secret is something that one person knows.' He feels fairly certain that Kasparov hasn't been talking about the collaboration, because he had emphasized how advantageous it would be to keep it quiet.

It strikes me as unlikely that Kramnik learned the news from one of Nakamura's early confidants (as opposed to a Russian connection) but, be that as it may, if gaining a competitive advantage was the goal of secrecy, it doesn't seem to have worked. Since Wijk aan Zee, it's safe to assume that most of the elite have at least considered his work with Kasparov likely, if still uncertain.

In April, Nakamura sat out the U.S. Championship, citing a desire to focus on the top international tournaments, and avoid potentially wild swings in his rating. It's not unheard of for top ten players to skip their national championship (Carlsen and Anand have both done so), but then again, Fischer played in eight and won them all, and there remains some prestige associated with being the U.S. Champion.

Now the reason is clear: Kasparov was against it. He contacted Sinquefield to explain why, shortly after Nakamura's Dutch victory. Rex was a little disappointed, but said he understood. 'I told him I was going to defer to him on that, and it was absolutely between him and Hikaru... I said I don't want to get in the way of progress. So I've been very much hands-off on the whole thing.'

When I asked Hikaru if he regrets not playing, at first he hesitated to answer, but then said it was the first of a handful of decisions he now considers 'very big mistakes'.

One benefit of having Nakamura on the sidelines during the championship was that he was available to guest star on the live webcast during several rounds. When not doing commentary, he would often sit in the back of the room, chatting with Kasparov via Skype. That dispelled any doubt left in my mind – well, that and an e-mail (I was inadvertently forwarded) from Kasparov himself, with details about their next planned meeting.

The second training session was again in New York, at the end of April, shortly before Nakamura was to play an exhibition match against Ruslan Ponomariov in Saint Louis, which he won.

Nakamura then travelled to Romania for the Kings' Tournament, in June. By now he realized that he couldn't count on the element of surprise, but that was no cause for alarm.

If you both have studied Garry Kasparov's colossal database you may have extra interest in the other's moves. Hikaru Nakamura peeks over Magnus Carlsen's shoulder at the Grand Slam Final.

'When you look at chess these days, the advantages that players get in the games – the windows of opportunity – are so much smaller, just because so many openings aren't playable or are considered to be very drawish nowadays... But I think, still, having all the work – having access to Garry's database certainly – it still gives me somewhat of an edge to at least know that I'm playing the best possible openings.'

The... best... possible. This is a point Kasparov is adamant about, and not always in a good way. A *New Yorker* magazine profile of Carlsen mentions 'the abrupt end' to his partnership with Kasparov, after Magnus' ninth round loss to Kramnik at Corus 2009.

In fact, Kramnik himself guessed what had happened in his post-game press conference: Magnus and Garry had a quarrel over openings. But the details are revealing: Carlsen is very keen on feeling calm and unworried before a game. He disliked talking with Kasparov by phone, and Henrik explicitly told Kasparov not to call Magnus shortly before a game. When Kasparov discovered what he felt was a critical theoretical hole in Magnus' preparation for Kramnik, he ignored the warning and called anyway.

The New Yorker goes on to say that

for Carlsen, 'great chess playing is less "the scientific search for the best approaches" than "psychological warfare with some little tricks."' In this instance, Carlsen had taken a major psychological hit before he even sat down at the board.

Knowing all this, I was curious if something similar had ever happened to Nakamura.

'It has happened once or twice... there was an instance while in Bazna where this occurred, and it's certainly very unsettling to have that happen, but at the same time I stuck to my guns and you play it – if your opponent finds the absolute best moves – sure it's equal, it'll probably be a draw. But if they don't you probably will get an advantage.

'I think at the end of the day what matters is it is my decision – I'm the one playing the game – if the result is good and I've found the right moves and I've played well, generally there's not a problem. Now if I start making mistakes or blunders, it's a much different story, as I found out in Dortmund.'

Before playing Dortmund, Nakamura was due for his third training session.

Wijk aan Zee, January 2011. Bilbao tournament director Juan Carlos Fernandez congratulates Hikaru Nakamura on the biggest success in his career and invites him to the Grand Slam Final.

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I actually got a very good position because, in fact, my opponent played a dubious variation.

'Garry's very thorough when it comes to preparing for players. He tries to think through everything and figure out all the options before simply deciding that, say, the Caro-Kann is the right opening.

'I think one of the big differences between Garry and myself is that he views chess sort of like, you have to find the best move, period. There's no room for taking chances. Whereas I think I'm a little bit more practical, where there's some openings or certain ideas which, objectively, they might not be the absolute best ideas, but it's sort of where if

This time, rather than New York, the pair was planning to meet at Kasparov's home in Makarska, Croatia, a town of 14,000 people on the Adriatic Sea coast.

Much to Kasparov's consternation, Nakamura decided instead to skip it and head to Las Vegas to play in the World Series of Poker. One can only imagine the Skype conversation that move engendered! This was the second 'very big mistake' Hikaru explained in Bilbao.

Although he ended up on a disappointing but respectable –1 score – the same as in Bazna – the tournament in Dortmund was nearly a disaster from the standpoint of his opening prep. As he told me at the time, 'the fact is that I was out-prepared in most of my games, and the other big issue is the fact that I wasn't willing to just accept draws in this tournament. In many games it seemed, looking back in retrospect, that I went out of my way to create double-edged positions, or end up in worse positions, just because I felt like trying to win.'

In the very first round, against Kramnik, he used an idea which Kasparov had suggested in January before Wijk aan Zee.

'That completely backfired in Dortmund against Kramnik... It was just an idea and it's objectively equal. Kramnik found a correct way to navigate it and I blundered to lose the game.

'Kasparov knew it was equal, but – not to be really pessimistic – but the way you win games these days is through your opponent's blundering. If your opponents find all the right moves with the right ideas you're probably not going to win – it's just that simple.'

Nakamura is looking for a balance between playing solidly – being willing to accept a draw when necessary – and his natural proclivity to fight for a win in every game. Yes, the ever growing body of opening theory can be a drag, but there's still a lot of classical chess left to be played.

'OK, I shouldn't bring this example, because I'm biased but – someone like Grischuk, for example. Every game [in the World Cup] he's just drawing in ten moves and I feel like that's more because he's sort of resigned himself to thinking that certain openings are draws or the game itself is a draw. It's very easy to go into those sorts of mindsets and I think when you do that, your results are going to suffer just because you're not feeling confident, you think it's a draw, everything's a little bit off. I do agree that it certainly is getting tougher to win games because the players are becoming stronger and stronger. But you still look at the top players and you see them winning games with both colours still, and until that stops occurring, or until players with both colours resign themselves to the game being a draw,

there will still be a lot of exciting games being played.'

Throughout the past year, Nakamura has continued to work and travel with his long-time second, Kris Littlejohn. At first glance this might seem a little strange; on one side you've got the best player in history, and on the other a 2220 (USCF) rated economics major. But Nakamura makes a logical case for why there's no cognitive disconnect.

'I noticed with Kris, generally his thought process – the opening ideas he came up with – tended to be on par with Garry. In fact I actually found that he reached the same conclusion, only a little bit quicker [at least with regard to overall opening choice, if not a specific variation – M.P.]. That, maybe more than anything, sort of convinced me that I should keep Kris on, because it shows that he's not completely out in the woods. He knows what he's doing.

'If Kris could actually remember what he prepares, he would easily be a GM – probably a weak GM but I still think he would be a GM. His problems are not coming up with ideas or being able to play them. His problems are that he can't actually remember what he prepares.

'I just feel having a second set of eyes – having someone who I trust – trying to come up with these little extra ideas and refine it is still very helpful. Garry can give me the ideas but Garry's not able to put in the same sort of work that Kris is able to do for me.'

Kasparov hasn't specifically suggested that Nakamura stop working with Kris, but Hikaru points out that he has referred to even a few highly rated grandmasters, like Sergei Movsesian, as 'chess tourists'. Kasparov has no relationship with Kris; they don't speak, and Hikaru doesn't see any reason to try to persuade his coach that keeping Littlejohn as a second has merit.

'If there isn't a big issue, I try to be much more of a pacifist these days – trying to just be calm and let everything flow as smoothly as possible instead of trying to cause problems or being very complicated. I feel like – especially during the tournaments – you don't need that. You need to be very focused and when you start having a lot of distractions it tends to cause problems.'

This sentiment echoes one expressed by Carlsen. Henrik describes Kasparov as 'aggressive', and someone who 'thrives on conflict', whereas Magnus wants no conflict, no heated discussion of any kind. He notes that with Kasparov's knowledge and natural authority, he gravitated towards a role that was increasingly dominant, over the course of his work with Magnus.

> 'One of the big differences between Garry and myself is that he views chess sort of like, you have to find the best move, period. There's no room for taking chances.'

As far as their contract went, Kasparov was 'over-performing', Henrik explains. He was eager – maybe too eager – to work with Magnus. Even so, the pair had a fruitful partnership for almost a full year (the first training session was in Moscow, in February 2009) with no major clashes.

Kasparov has never discussed the Carlsen breakup with Nakamura.

'No that's never come up. I feel like you really need to focus on what's really important. He worked with Magnus and I think in some ways he has some insights into the way Magnus plays which are very beneficial when I play against Magnus, but overall, that's personal, and it's not going to change anything whether I know or not.'

At the end of Bilbao, I wondered whether Hikaru is ever preoccupied when playing Magnus, simply with the mere fact that he knows Magnus has been through the same process as he has. After all, he's seen the same database, no doubt discussed the same intricacies of the Najdorf for hours on end. But Nakamura says, no way.

'During the game, very rarely does my thought ever wander beyond simply calculating at the board, whereas in the past I used to be always thinking about many different things – so it doesn't really enter my mind. I know that it's certainly a bit difficult because at this level all the top players play many of the same openings, so you always wonder what has he looked at with Garry for instance, but you still go and you try to come up with new ideas and play them, and certainly here, more so than in Wijk, I felt like I really rose to the challenge and I played very well, considering the last couple of games where I lost quite badly to Magnus.'

Nakamura's third and fourth mistakes of the year were to play in the U.S. Open, while skipping the World Cup. Playing in the U.S. Open was entirely his idea. Kasparov didn't even know about it, Hikaru said, and was shocked.

'He was already pretty upset about my Dortmund result so he didn't really care at that point. I just felt like I needed to play. Maybe it was the wrong tournament objectively, because there were very few games that actually counted towards the FIDE ratings, but I just felt like I had to at least try and play in something in the U.S. – just to see if I could win – just to try and turn something around... Really nothing was going right in Dortmund, and I don't think it was simply my chess, I think it was my whole outlook, my perspective on everything.'

The U.S. Open is a far weaker field than the U.S. Championship, which

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goes against the rationale for skipping the more prestigious event in April. Nakamura says it was a bit of a random choice.

The World Cup, by contrast, was a more complicated decision. The Chess Club had planned to hold an event to coincide with the opening of the new World Chess Hall of Fame in September, and settled on a 'Battle of the Sexes' rapid and a Chess960 Scheveningen tournament. They badly wanted Nakamura for first board of the men's team. *'At the time, first of all, the World Cup dates had only just been put up on the FIDE calendar – there were no specifics – and secondly Garry felt it would probably be too much to play in the World Cup and then come here to Bilbao. So between those two I decided that it made more sense. Having not played in the U.S. Championship I felt a certain responsibility towards Saint Louis to at least play in an event at the Club.'*

The downside of missing the World Cup is that if Saint Louis opts not to bid for the next FIDE Candidates' tournament – and they are not planning on it at the time of this writing – Nakamura may have no chance to qualify for the next World Championship, in 2014. For now, this seems not to worry him. *'I think it's just a matter of making the right decisions, and I didn't make them, but it's not the end of the world – I'll certainly have my chances either next year or three years down the road, to make the cycle.'*

Carlsen had five training sessions over the course of a year. So far, Nakamura has had just three. The collaboration hasn't always been smooth, but Nakamura says the Croatia experience, followed by a long vacation in Vancouver, reset his frame of mind, so that he now feels positive about life and chess again.

'He is definitely peripatetic', Sinquefield told me when I asked about Nakamura's connection to Saint Louis. His contract with the Chess Club is up for renewal in May. Meanwhile Kasparov's agreement is with Sinquefield directly, and not through the Chess Club, so there is no explicit link between the two. In addition to the training it includes Kasparov spending a few days in Saint Louis each year for a Chess Club function. Nevertheless, Sinquefield noted via e-mail, 'without preordaining any decision, Hikaru's moving from Saint Louis would probably call for a re-evaluation.'

Sinquefield has confidence in both Kasparov and Nakamura. 'I wouldn't have gone into this if I didn't think he had a realistic chance [at a World Championship match], and Garry wouldn't have either', he said, adding that he expects the training to continue into a second year. 'It think it's worth it – regardless of the outcome.'

Carlsen's rise while working with Kasparov was *so* pronounced, his results so outstanding in 2009 and 2010, that it would be a mistake to measure the successes or failures of this new 'dream team' by the same standard. In a way, Carlsen may have taken his work with Kasparov for granted. Or perhaps they both did. Magnus even considered scheduling a training session as late as June 2010, but ultimately decided he didn't need it. Had he not backed away, Nakamura might never have had his own chance.
'I noticed from the article on ChessVibes [about the recent Norwegian biography on Carlsen – M.P.], that Kasparov basically said that Magnus was too lazy and didn't work enough, and in some ways I guess it's the same with me. I can be a bit lazy, but at the same time when the training sessions actually happen, I'm usually very into it. I really enjoy chess during those sessions.'

If winning is about profiting from your opponent's blunders, as Hikaru says, then by the same token his opponents this year have had a bit of a free ride. What happens next will largely depend on where he chooses to take the opportunity that has been given to him. Sometimes, it almost seems like he relishes the difficult path.
'We'll see if I've made a fifth mistake soon enough, because I actually decided to play Reggio [Emilia] a couple of days ago. That'll be a fun topic to discuss with Garry. I was actually told not to play in Reggio, but – I don't know – I've made a lot of wrong decisions and it felt like, in many of these cases, I wanted to make the right decision and I sort of let his influence – you know – sort of deferred too much, and maybe I didn't think it through. And I feel like in this case, it feels like the right decision, so for once, I'm not going to go against my gut, I'm just going to play.'

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam contributed reporting to this story. ■

Magnus Carlsen stars in The Big Chase

After only four rounds of the Grand Slam Final few believed that Magnus Carlsen still stood a chance. While the top-seed lingered on a depressing minus-score, a brilliant Vasily Ivanchuk proudly topped the elite gathering on plus-3.

The gap dividing them, in terms of the football scoring system that was applied, was an awesome 7 points. Seemingly against all odds, Carlsen refused to think about anything else but first place and that was when the big chase started. As in a Hollywood script the Norwegian chased the early leader from Sao Paulo to Bilbao, caught up with him by defeating him in both their direct encounters and finally wrestled him down in the blitz play-off to crown another historic catch-up act.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam

Bilbao, the last round but one. After a frantic chase on two continents, Magnus Carlsen is about to catch up with early leader Vasily Ivanchuk.

Perhaps Vasily Ivanchuk would have felt more comfortable if he had been allowed to wear his cap. Shifting on his chair, squinting and plucking at his eyebrows, the Ukrainian grandmaster seemed to have lost control in the second game of the blitz play-off against Magnus Carlsen that was to decide victory in the Grand Slam Final. The first game, as Black, he had conducted with incisive determination, and although it ended in a draw, it was he who had pressed in the endgame. Now, with the advantage of the white pieces, he appeared to be at a loss about what strategy to choose. 'Vasha seems to want to lose this game', commented one of his colleagues, puzzled by his passivity. Together with hundreds of spectators he was following the play-off in the atrium of the Alhondiga on the huge screen above the glass cube, the traditional playing room in the Grand Slam Final.

Of course, Ivanchuk didn't really want to lose this game, but he seemed to have run out of steam; his will to fight had been broken. Having made

the necessary preparations, Carlsen invaded the white position, and when he was about to smash the white defences his opponent resigned the game.

As they came out of the back door of the glass cube, Carlsen was congratulated by his father Henrik. Ivanchuk wandered off, lost in thought. His second, Manuel Leon Hoyos, ran after him, put his arm around his shoulder and tried to console him. When they returned from their brief walk, Ivanchuk appeared to have overcome the shock of defeat. Enthusiastically he discussed a variation with Levon Aronian and at the prize-giving that followed immediately after the play-off, he smiled and joked and looked the happiest man on earth.

When he turned up for the after-party at the players' hotel later that evening, he was wearing his cap again. He got it in Reggio Emilia earlier this year. It's a red cap of the Accademia Internazionale di Scacchi and he's been wearing it so intensely that it looks a bit scruffy by now. He feels comfortable when he is wearing it (or the other cap he is the proud owner of) and he had asked the organizers for permission to wear it during the games, as he had done in the Greek League. They denied his request, saying it was not in line with the dress code, which essentially only asked the players to wear a jacket during the games.

Travelling from one tournament to the other, sticking to a gruelling schedule that would frighten many younger players, 42-year-old Ivanchuk says that he has an easy way to cope with the ceaseless challenges: he doesn't give them much thought. What counts for him is that he feels at ease, and for that purpose small details like a favourite cap play their small parts. He may work on his opening preparation at home, but he may just as well come up with new ideas on the road, just like rock stars write new songs in hotel rooms. Churches, he has found, are among the best places to stimulate his creativity. There he may pray, as he does once a week in the Orthodox or Armenian churches in his home-town Lviv, but he may also think about his openings. In his prayers he thinks about his friends and family, and he often asks for help to contain his nervousness during a game. In Sao Paulo he went to a Catholic church, actually he even went there the day before he and his wife were robbed. On the day that they were to fly to Bilbao, they were robbed at gunpoint when they were about to leave the hotel. When I counter that apparently going to church doesn't always help, he reacts with the typical logic of the true believer: of course it helped, as he and his wife survived the robbery! They only lost their suitcases and his wife's passport. The robbers also forgot to take his computer. There were a couple of things in his suitcase that he was attached to, including his famous Real Madrid training jacket (which two years ago, in Linares, he wore against the organizers' wishes!), but he is even philosophical about that loss: he can buy a new one.

> 'One fan from the north of Brazil found this such a historical occasion that he even sold his motorbike to pay for the trip.'

Although he thinks he was a bit unlucky in the play-off, Ivanchuk prefers to look back on the tournament with satisfaction. He played creative chess and came up with many an interesting idea. He certainly did. In Sao Paulo he defeated the World Champion in a great fight, and his spectacular win against Aronian was the highlight of the first half of the Final. And those who believe that the robbery in Sao Paulo threw him off balance are wrong, he stresses. After all, he immediately won his next game in Bilbao against Nakamura. But in case this was not enough to reassure his fans, he adds with a broad grin that we can tell them that he is absolutely fine and that the incident left no emotional scars whatsoever.

So perhaps the robbery was mainly a blow for the Brazilian organizers, who obviously could not have foreseen this happening inside a five-star hotel, in the area where cars can pick up guests, in a quiet neighbourhood of Sao Paulo. All the players praised the organization in Sao Paulo for staging such a wonderful event in little more than six months. They had a glass cube built that according to the players was better than the one in Bilbao, and every day about two thousand people came to watch, including some five hundred loyal chess fans. One fan from the north of Brazil found this such a historical occasion that he even sold his motorbike to pay for the trip. The tournament was played in the Ibirapuera Park, which is so big that on the first day Aronian arrived 15 minutes early at one of the gates and yet was 15 minutes late for the game, as he had entered the wrong end of the park.

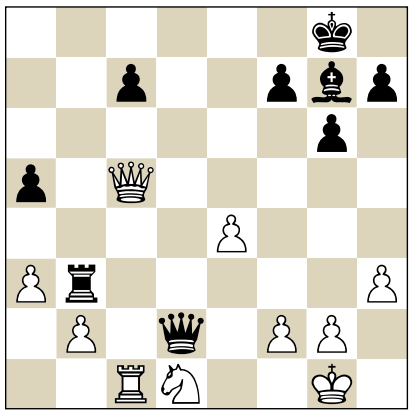
One of the organizers in Sao Paulo, Brazilian GM Gilberto Milos, listens with an amused smile when he hears of the praise. He is happy that the players had no idea of the stress and uncertainty that often ruled behind the scenes. Only after the Mayor of Sao Paulo, in a joint video press conference with the Mayor of Bilbao, had given a financial guarantee, did he know that the tournament would actually take place. Moreover, the support of the city also solved various logistical problems, such as security, which was handled by the local police.

The Brazilian economy is booming and Milos hopes that his country,

which will also organize the football World Cup and the Olympic Games in 2014 and 2016, will attract additional big chess events.

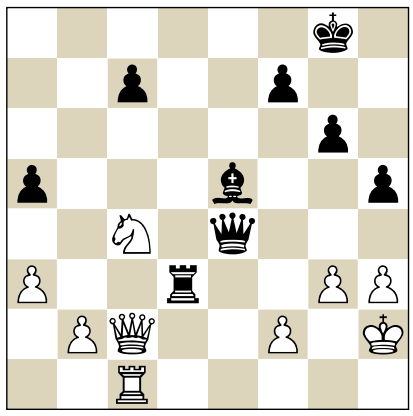
Despite his loss in the last round played in Sao Paulo, Ivanchuk travelled to Europe as the tournament leader, 3 points clear of Nakamura, who was on plus-one thanks to a win over Vallejo. Although he didn't make it to the opening ceremony in Bilbao, an unfazed Ivanchuk immediately picked up the thread in Round 6 with a further win, increasing his lead over his closest pursuers to 5 points. Who could stop him? Well, to start with, Ivanchuk himself. It would be his last win. The Bilbao leg was going to be Magnus Carlsen's show.

Although he was the highest-ranked player, not everyone regarded Carlsen as the odds-on favourite, perhaps on the basis of his earlier play in the Grand Slam Final. His start was certainly shaky and his loss in Round 3 from a winning position against Vallejo seemed a bad omen.



Vallejo-Carlsen
Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2011 (3)
position after 25.♖c1

White has got himself in big trouble. His only hope is Black's lack of time. **25...♕e1+** Carlsen spent about six precious minutes calculating 25...♖d3, when 26.♘e3 ♗d4 is very annoying for White. And he also thought 25...♗h6 interesting. **26.♔h2 ♕xe4** This gives Black a huge advantage. After the game Carlsen was annoyed that he had not taken this practical decision rightaway instead of spending time that he could not really afford. **27.♕c2 ♗e5+ 28.g3 ♖d3** Missing 28...♕f3, which would see Black winning after 29.♘c3 ♗d4 30.♖f1 (30.♕xb3 is impossible because of 30...♕xf2+ 31.♔h1 ♕xg3 32.♕c2 ♗f2) 30...♕b7. **29.♘e3 h5 30.♘c4**



30...♕d5? And this oversight in time-trouble even cost him the game. Necessary was 30...♗f6. **31.♘xe5** The rest is easy for White. **31...♖d2 32.♕c5 ♕xc5 33.♖xc5 ♖xf2+ 34.♔g1 ♖xb2 35.♖xc7 ♖b3 36.♔g2 ♖xa3 37.♘xf7 a4 38.♖a7 ♖a1 39.♘e5 g5 40.g4 hxg4 41. hxg4 a3 42.♘f3** Black resigned.

Following this upset (after two initial draws) some of Carlsen's fans kept their hopes alive by referring to the London Chess Classic last year, when he fought back from a seemingly hopeless position to win the tournament. He might do so again, for sure, but probably they mainly wanted their hopes to be stronger than their fears. On the other hand, they may have known that one person had not given up hope yet. Looking back on the tournament, Carlsen revealed once again that he is not one to give up easily: 'Even after four rounds I was only thinking of first place really, however unrealistic that may sound. That reminded me of Tal in '62 in Curaçao. He was advised by his doctors not to play, he had just undergone a kidney operation, and he started with three losses. And still he was only thinking of first place. Even into the second cycle, when he was in last or last-but-one place, he was still thinking how he could possibly win the tournament!'

The first must-win game arrived in Round 5, Black against Ivanchuk. The opening, a French Defence, went well for him, but the game gradually drifted into a dead drawn position. At that point Carlsen had to fight the urge to lie down on the floor and just cry, but instead he plodded on and was pleasantly surprised by a move that Ivan-

DAVID LLADA

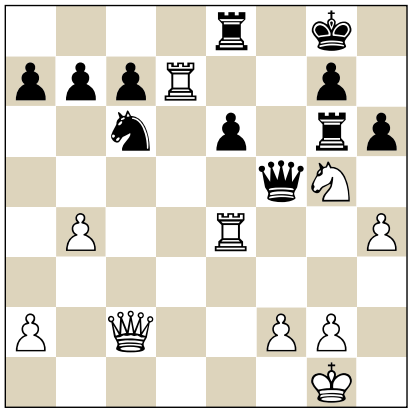
Happy to wear his cap again. Vasily Ivanchuk reassured his fans that the robbery at gun point in Sao Paulo had left no emotional scars whatsoever.

chuk, even after several days, still could not believe that he had made. Instead of the safe 22.bxc3 he inexplicably went 22.b3, only to realize after 22...♖e8 that Black had taken over. 'The rest of the game was eventful,' noted Carlsen, 'but anyway I managed to win.'

In Rounds 6 and 7 Carlsen drew with the two players that disappointed. Vishy Anand played a 'terrible' tournament, only scoring two wins, against Vallejo. He needed the second win against the Spaniard, in the final round, to stay clear of last place. He succeeded, although 'even that game was atrocious, but I managed to stumble on a win anyway.' His overall assessment was understandably brief: 'Things went wrong more or less from the start. I am not a big fan of coming up with explanations. I don't see the point of it. I just played really badly.'

Levon Aronian tried to see the sunny side of the meagre 50% score he went home with. 'Obviously that was not what I had come for. It's one of those things that you have a bad tournament and you feel it was good for you. I wasn't getting the concentration that I need during the game. From time to time you keep on forgetting about that. You can forget during your first couple of games, but if you keep doing the same thing the whole tournament, it's a different thing. You have to have the right schedule, the way you structure your day. When you are going to look at things, how you are going to work during the game. I was not doing that and it backfired.'

In the penultimate round he fought back with a fine win over Anand that ended with an elegant coup de grâce.



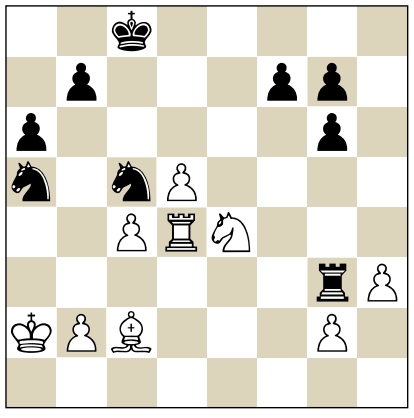
Aronian-Anand
position after 24...♕f5

25.♖xe6!
Black resigned.

Dejected and full of self-reproach, Paco Vallejo prepares for the moment to resign his game against Magnus Carlsen in Round 8.

NEW IN CHESS

Carlsen moved a bit closer to Ivanchuk when in Round 8 he had his revenge against Vallejo.



Carlsen-Vallejo
position after 32.♘e4

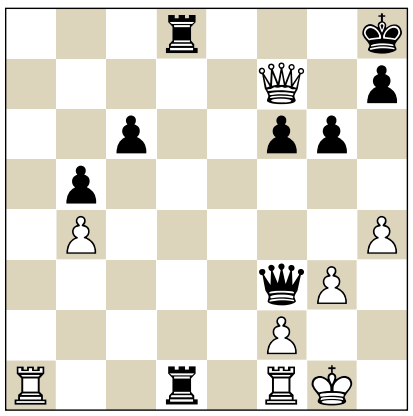
White is perhaps slightly better, but after 32...♘xe4 33.♗xe4 ♘b3 the game should normally end in a draw. Vallejo saw another way to equality, missing a devilish trap. **32...♖xg2? 33.♖d2!** Black has to take the rook and then the threat of b4 loses a knight. **33...♖xd2 34.♘xd2 b5 35.b4 ♘ab7 36.bxc5 ♘xc5 37.♘e4** The rest is easy. **37...♘b7 38.c5 f5 39.c6 fxe4 40.cxb7+ ♔xb7 41.♗xe4 ♔c7 42.♔b3 a5 43.♔c3 a4 44.♗c2 g5 45.♔d4 ♔d6 46.♗d1** Black resigned.

Paco Vallejo was one of the substitutes (the other one was Ivanchuk!) that were invited after Vladimir Kramnik and Sergey Karjakin had declined the invitation to play in the Grand Slam Final. The Spaniard had a rough time of it. The local hero did manage to win three(!) games, but two of those wins were from dubious or lost positions. However, all three of his wins had a clear impact. His best effort, against Ivanchuk in Round 7, allowed Carlsen to close in on the leader, and his win in the penultimate round would also make headlines.

By then it had become clear that the fight for first place was still wide open. If Carlsen defeated Ivanchuk in Round 9, he would catch up with him. What's more, if Nakamura won his game against Vallejo, there would suddenly be three leaders with one

round to go! The American was having an excellent tournament, and with a fine win over Aronian in Round 8, he had moved within striking distance of the top spot.

That ninth round will not easily be forgotten. Carlsen continued to add predictable twists and turns to his Hollywood script and indeed defeated Ivanchuk in a turbulent game. In the meantime, Nakamura also seemed to be doing everything that was needed for a thrilling finale. With great patience and expertise he had endured Vallejo's Exchange Variation against the King's Indian, had taken over the initiative and seemed to have good winning chances. Some believed that Vallejo had drawing chances, others expected him to succumb to the pressure. Sadly, all speculation was cut short in the following position.



Vallejo-Nakamura
position after 40.♖a1

Both players were in great time-trouble and were no longer writing down their moves. Nakamura had to make one more move to make the time-control, but not knowing how many moves he had made, he made a terrible mistake. Turning towards the arbiter he asked if he had made 40 moves, not realizing that the rules don't allow the arbiter to say anything. As a consequence arbiter Anil Surender remained silent, but as he bit his tongue he inadvertently made a move with his head that Nakamura interpreted as a reassuring nod! The rest was pure tragedy. Nakamura, under the impression that he had made the time-control, got up and poured himself a glass of orange juice backstage. In the meantime the 45 seconds he still had ran out and when he returned the arbiter had to inform him that he had lost the game. One of the most painful losses in his career, as he would later call it.

NEW IN CHESS

At a culinary demonstration on the final free day Vasily Ivanchuk, Hikaru Nakamura, Paco Vallejo, Vishy Anand and Levon Aronian watch what they will soon be eating.

Understandably Nakamura was upset, and in a first reaction lodged a protest, which not surprisingly was turned down by the tournament director. Everyone agreed that what had happened was extremely unfortunate, but in the end everyone, including Nakamura, also agreed that it had been his own fault. A fault that he might have avoided if he had realized that he could have looked at his clock to see if he had made the required number of moves. After 40 moves it would give him 40 new minutes, and as these hadn't appeared on the display, he could have known that he had not yet made the time-control.

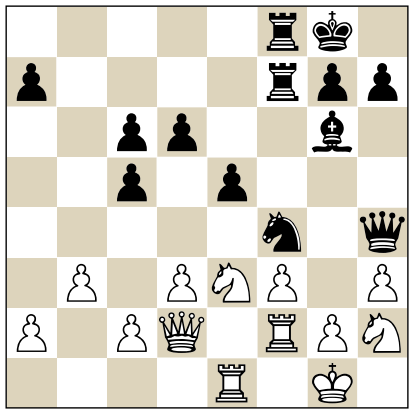
Nakamura admitted his own mistake, but remained critical of the fast time-control of 90 minutes for 40 moves without increments (as in the FIDE time-control) that was used in the tournament. 'I felt that there were a lot of games that were decided by this time-control in the final couple of minutes. Magnus, for instance, lost a game against Vallejo because he blundered horribly. Some people think that's more exciting, that that's gonna draw more sponsors and more media attention, but for me, as I get further and further from blitz, I think that people should have more time. I just feel the quality goes down with the quicker time-controls. At this level, where it is all about being as precise as you can, playing the absolutely best moves, I think it's quite unacceptable to have games where you have 90 minutes for 40 moves. That's not how it should be.'

With Ivanchuk-Aronian and Nakamura-Carlsen on the menu in the last round, anything could happen, but as it turned out, both games were relatively contained efforts that both ended in draws. And so two blitz games (four minutes and a three-second increment per move), if necessary followed by an Armageddon game, were to decide the winner of the 4th Grand Slam Final and who would get first or second prize. For unclear reasons, the details of the prize-fund were not revealed, but it was clear that there were only prizes and no starting fees.

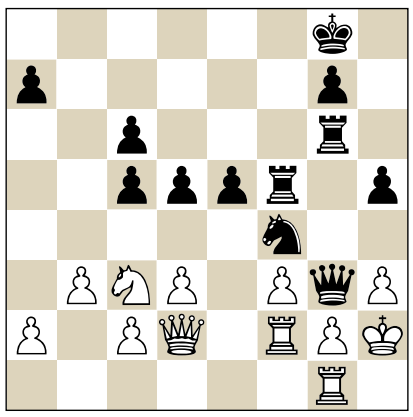
As said, Magnus Carlsen completed his mission in the second blitz game.

RL 7.1 – C65
Vasily Ivanchuk
Magnus Carlsen

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.♗e3 ♕e7 6.♗xc6 bxc6 7.♗xc5 ♕xc5 8.♘c3 0-0 9.0-0 ♖b8 10.♕d2 ♕e7 11.b3 c5 12.h3 d6 13.♘h2 ♘h5 14.♘d5 ♕d8 15.♖ae1 ♗e6 16.♘c3 f5 17.exf5 ♗xf5 18.f3 ♗g6 19.♖f2 ♕h4 20.♘d5 ♖f7 21.♕c3 c6 22.♘e3 ♘f4 23.♕d2 ♖bf8



24.♘d1 h5 25.♘c3 ♗f5 26.♘e2 ♘e6 27.♕e3 ♖f6 28.♔h1 ♖g6 29.♖g1 ♘c7 30.♖gf1 ♘d5 31.♕d2 ♖gf6 32.♘c3 ♘f4 33.♘e4 ♖g6 34.♖g1 ♕d8 35.♘f1 ♕e7 36.♘fg3 d5 37.♘xf5 ♖xf5 38.♘c3 ♕h4 39.♔h2 ♕g3+



White resigned.

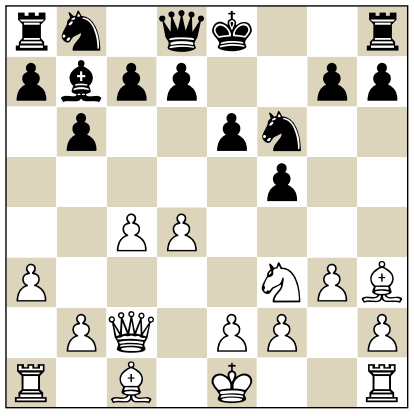
Naturally, Carlsen was delighted with his win at the end of a long and exciting chase, but true to his convictions he was critical of his play. There was not one game that he was entirely satisfied with. 'Some things are really hard to do, almost impossible to do, like playing perfectly in extremely complicated positions. But it really bugs me when I miss things that I really shouldn't have. I am always going to make mistakes. I don't have any illusions that my understanding of chess is perfect or anything like that. It's just that I have to work on relatively simple mistakes. Those I am making every tournament. When I can lower the percentage of such mistakes then things are going to be much better.'

One of the subjects that inevitably popped up after this confirmation of his top position in the world rankings, is the question of whether he is considering taking part in the Candidates' tournament next year. Some websites optimistically announced that he had already decided to take part. It's a bit more complicated than that. 'Just changing it from knock-out matches to a tournament is just not enough to fix everything. There are further steps that need to be taken. I will play there, provided that everything about the conditions, the contract, everything, is clear.'

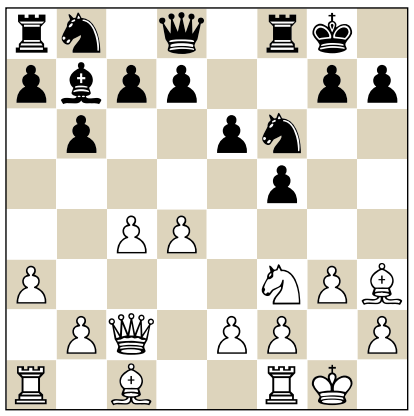
NOTES BY
Magnus Carlsen

NI 24.3 – E21
Magnus Carlsen
Vasily Ivanchuk
Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2011 (9)

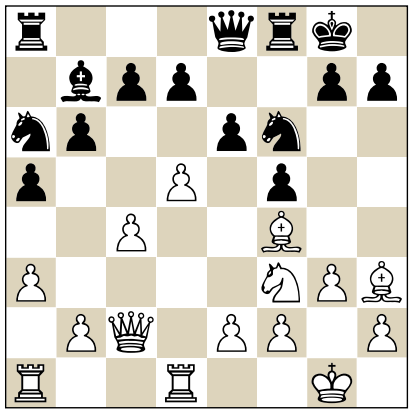
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♘f3 b6 5.♕c2
This apparently came as a surprise to Ivanchuk, even though I had played it against Anand in Round 6. It might have something to do with the fact that I had achieved very little in that game.
5...♗b7 6.a3 ♗xc3+ 7.♕xc3
All of the three main moves here – 7...d6, 7...0-0 and 7...♘e4 – were tried against me in Bilbao. Regrettably, I did not show the same versatility, only employing two of the three possible set-ups from this position (no e3, ♗e2 and so on).
7...♘e4 8.♕c2 f5 9.g3 ♘f6
A case could be made for including 9...0-0 10.♗g2 before making this move, which will anyway be necessary because of ♘g5 or ♘d2.
10.♗h3



Suddenly experiencing a burst of creativity, I decided to try and exploit the extra opportunity. The main idea behind this move is to be able to drive away the black bishop from e4 after ...♗e4, ♕ somewhere, without exchanging bishops.
10...0-0 11.0-0



11...a5
A far from obvious move, which Ivanchuk made immediately.
11...♕e8 12.d5 is similar to the game. However, 11...♗e4 12.♕c3 ♕e8 was quite interesting. Now 13.♘d2 is bad due to 13...♕h5, so I was going to continue playing creatively with 13.♖d1 ♕h5 14.♗f1 with good chances of fighting for an advantage.
12.♖d1 ♕e8 13.d5 ♘a6 14.♗f4
14.dxe6 dxe6 15.♗f4 looks a little bit better for White, but I was looking for something more interesting.



NEW IN CHESS

Immediately after his win in the blitz playoff a happy and relieved Magnus Carlsen was interviewed in the glass cube.

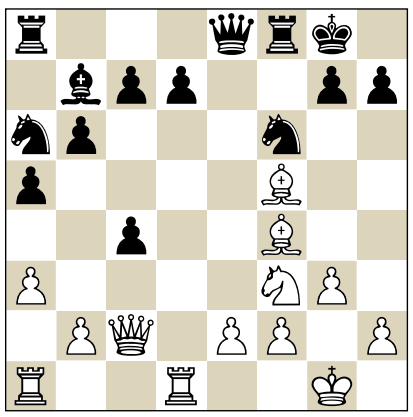
14...exd5? After this move Black is in serious trouble.

14...d6 looked much more logical to me: 15.dxe6 (15.♘g5 ♘c5 16.b4 h6 17.bxc5 hxg5 18.♗xg5 ♘e4 is not that clear) 15...♗e4 16.♕c3 ♘c5 (16...♕h5 17.♗f1 ♘c5 18.♘d4 just transposes) 17.♘d4 ♕h5 (White is clearly better after 17...♘xe6 18.♘xe6 ♕xe6 19.f3 ♗b7 20.e4) 18.♗f1 ♖fe8 19.f3 ♗b7 20.b4 ♘xe6 21.♘xe6 ♖xe6 22.c5 dxc5 23.bxc5 ♕f7, and Black is more or less OK.

14...♕h5 15.♗g2 exd5 16.♘d4 g5 was given as interesting by online commentators. My decision to not delve deeper into it should be attributed to laziness, not arrogance.

15.♗xf5 dxc4

15...♘e4 16.♗h3 looks pretty cool for White too.



16.♘g5! The point. Now all kinds of tricks are possible.

16...♕h5

More or less forced. Black can hardly afford to give up the h7 pawn, and 16...h6 17.♗xd7 ♕e7 (17...♕h5 18.g4 ♕h4 19.♕xc4+ ♔h8 20.♘f7+ ♖xf7 21.♕xf7 and wins) 18.♕xc4+ ♔h8 19.♕e6! is pretty straightforward.

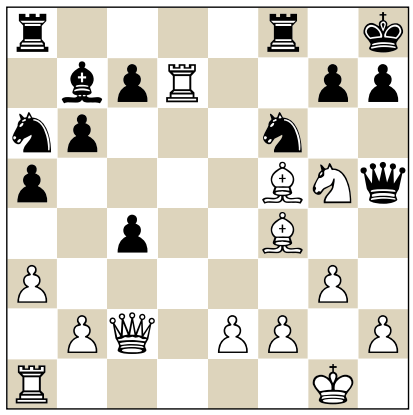
17.♖xd7

This move was so tempting that I hardly looked at others.

With a slightly cooler head, I might have come close to considering 17.♖d4! ♖ae8 18.♗d2, when 19.♖h4 next will be hard to meet.

17...♔h8

I quickly realized that this was the only move, but I thought there should still be some relatively easy way to win here. 17...♘xd7 18.♗xh7+ ♔h8 19.♗g6 ♕g4 (19...♕h6 20.♘f7+ ♖xf7 21.♗xh6) 20.h3 loses trivially.



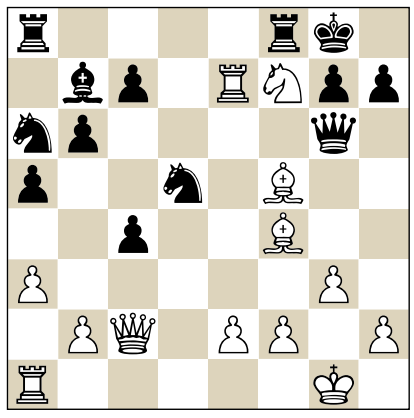
18.♖e7?!

Objectively speaking, a mistake. Unfortunately, I was not able to coolly give up the exchange without finding a forced win: 18.♖ad1! ♘xd7 19.♖xd7 ♘c5 (what else?) 20.♖xc7 ♖ad8 21.f3, and White is dominating.

18...♘d5 19.♗g4?!

Another step in the wrong direction. 19.♖e5 ♘xf4 20.gxf4 would still retain a clear advantage.

19...♕g6 20.♘f7+ ♔g8 21.♗f5

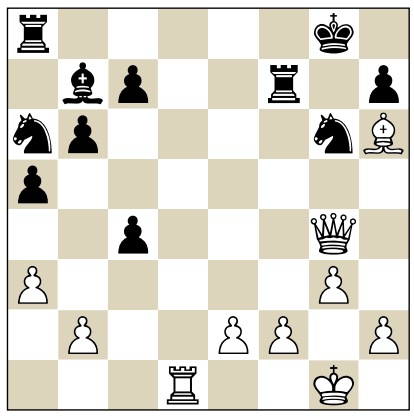


21...♕xf5! A nasty surprise.

22.♕xf5 ♘xe7 23.♘h6+ gxh6 24.♕g4+ ♘g6 25.♗xh6

Fortunately, White can still fight for an advantage here, and with the open black king White certainly has the easier game.

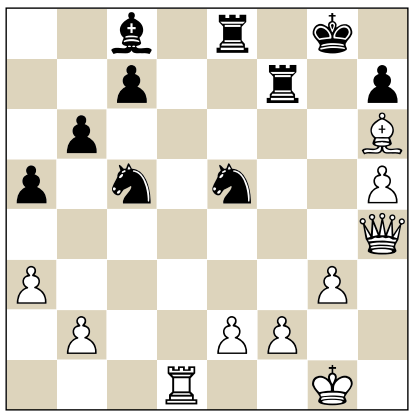
25...♖f7 26.♖d1



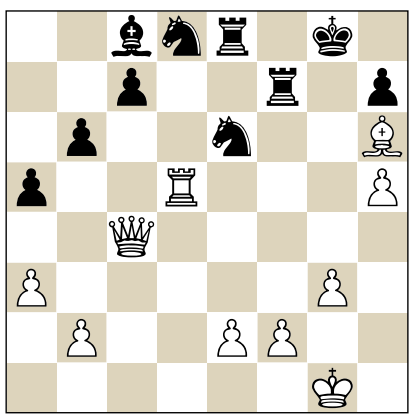
26...♖e8

26...c3 would have been an interesting try, but it's probably no better than the game continuation: 27.h4! (27.bxc3 ♘c5 is fine for Black) 27...c2 28.♖d7 ♘c5 29.♖xf7 ♔xf7 30.♕c4+ ♔e7 31.♕xc2, and White is clearly on top.

27.h4 ♘c5 28.h5 ♗c8 29.♕xc4 ♘e5 30.♕h4
By now Ivanchuk had gotten really short on time, which was not making his job any easier.



30...♘c6? After this Black can hardly defend. The best chance was 30... ♘e6 31.f4 (31.♖d5 ♖f5! is the key) 31...♘d7 32.e4 ♔h8, when there is still all to play for.
31.♖d5 ♘e6 32.♕c4
32.♕a4 would have been even stronger, but for some reason I did not consider this move at all. My idea with the text was to win the e5-square for my rook.
32...♘cd8?
32...♘e7 would have held out much longer, but after 33.♖e5 ♘f5 34.♕g4+ ♘fg7 35.♕e4 Black is pretty tied up, and White should gradually win.

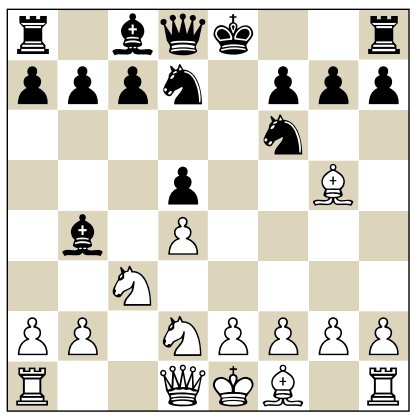


33.♕g4+ Surprisingly, the fact that the c8 bishop is unprotected becomes the decisive factor.
33...♘g7
Ivanchuk was visibly shocked when I captured his bishop, but 33...♔h8 34. ♗d2! would have been equally bad.
34.♕xc8
Black resigned.

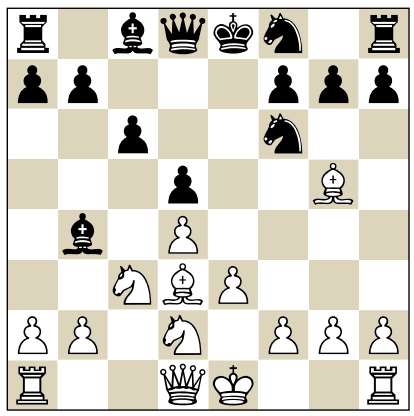
NOTES BY
Jan Timman

NI 27.6 – D37
Levon Aronian
Vasily Ivanchuk
Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2011 (4)

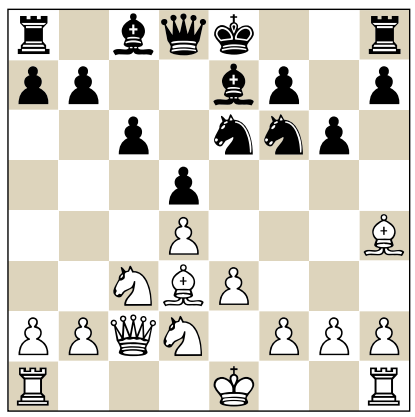
1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3 ♘bd7 5.♗g5 ♗b4 6.cxd5 exd5 7. ♘d2



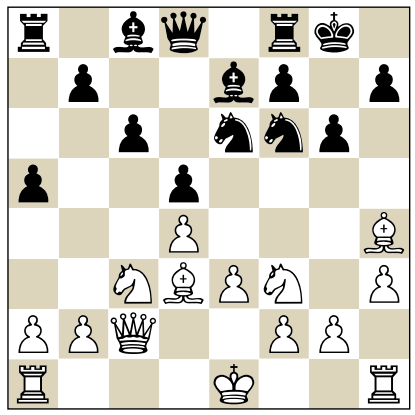
This knight move is common in certain lines of the Queen's Indian in which Black has fianchettoed his queen's bishop. The idea in this position is the same: White wants to relieve the pressure on c3.
7...c6 8.e3 ♘f8 A remarkable move beloved of the Belgian grandmaster Winants. Black executes an old manoeuvre from the Exchange Variation of the Queen's Gambit. The knight is on its way to e6 or g6.
9.♗d3
An obvious developing move. There is no practical example where White played differently. Yet 9.♗xf6 ♕xf6 10.♕a4! would have been excellent. Black is forced to swap on c3, which clearly favours White.



9...♗e7
Wise. After 9...♘e6, 10.♗xf6 ♕xf6 11.♕a4! would have been even stronger than on the previous move. After the text a position from the Exchange Variation with the extra move ♘f3-d2 for White arises, but it is doubtful whether the extra tempo will do White any good. Later in the game, White will withdraw the knight to f3, after which Black has, in fact, gained a tempo.
10.♕c2 ♘e6 11.♗h4 g6



12.h3 A crucial little move. White is anticipating the next knight manoeuvre 12...♘g7, which he can now meet with 13.g4.
12...0-0 13.♘f3
Aronian accepts the loss of tempo, but with a special intention: he does not want to show his hand yet. He may decide to castle queenside, but if Black attacks with 13...b5, he would castle kingside, when the black advance has only weakened Black's position.
13...a5
Ivanchuk also keeps his cards close to his chest, playing a move that always comes in handy in this line.



14.g4
The battle starts. It's interesting to see

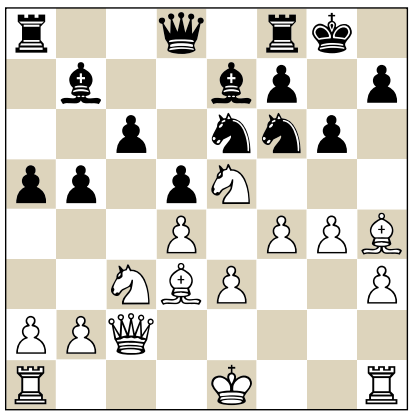
Levon Aronian and Vishy Anand were rightly unhappy with their play. The Armenian found some consolation in a flashy win over the World Champion in Round 9.

what an all-round player Aronian is. Sometimes, in unclear, somewhat boring positions, he concentrates on gaining a tiny advantage, which he then systematically extends. At other times he throws himself into wild adventures the outcome of which is hard to foresee. In quiet Queen's Gambit positions with his king in the middle, for example, he has been known to suddenly start advancing his kingside pawns. He has done so in the Lasker and the Tartakower Variations, and now he does it in this version of the Exchange Variation.

14...b5

Ivanchuk is not sitting on his hands either. Now that White's plans are clear, this advance is justified.

15.♘e5 ♗b7 16.f4



The consequence of the previous moves. Now the play gets very sharp.

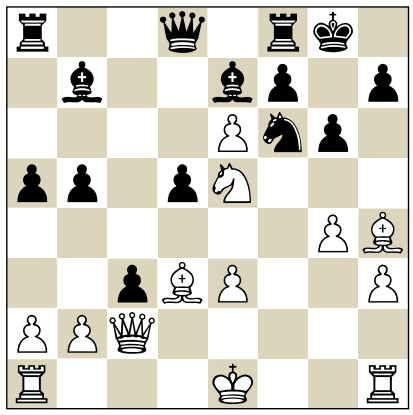
16...c5

By the book. The white attack on the kingside is met by action in the centre.

17.f5 cxd4

The correct way. Black also had several piece sacrifices that looked good but would just fail to yield sufficient play, e.g. 17...♘xg4 18.♗xe7 ♘xe3 19.♗xd8 ♘xc2+ 20.♗xc2 ♘xd4 21.0-0-0!, and White is better.

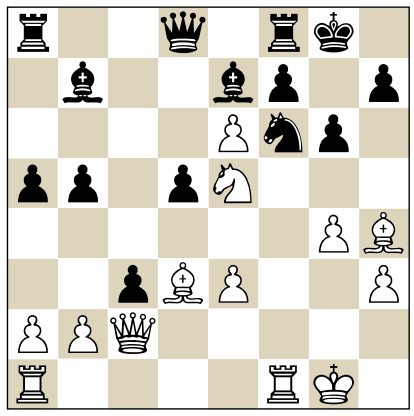
18.fxe6 dxc3



An original way to swap knights. Both kings are exposed, but White in particular will find it hard to find permanent shelter for his monarch. The position is dynamically balanced, although White will have to play more carefully.

19.0-0

The most accurate move. 19.exf7+ would have been met by 19...♔g7 20.0-0, after which Black had the promising sortie 20...♘e4!, with advantage.



19...d4

Now 19...♘e4 was less effective, since after 20.♗xe7 ♕xe7 White has the surprising 21.♘d7!, which is followed by a long and spectacular variation

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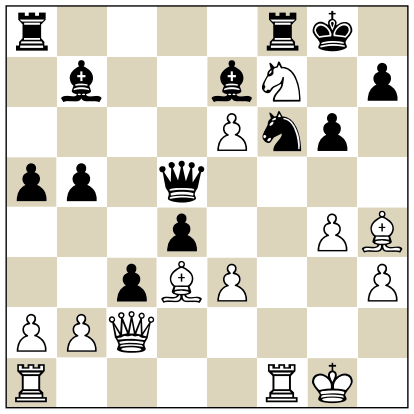
in which White manages to save his skin: 21...♘g5 22.♘f6+! (taking on f8 is not enough; Black gets too much compensation for the exchange) 22...♔g7 23.♕xc3 d4! 24.♕xd4 fxe6 25.♖ac1 e5 26.♕d7 ♖f7! 27.♖c7! ♘f3+ 28.♔g2! ♕xf6 29.♕xf7+ ♕xf7 30.♖xf7+ ♔xf7 31.e4, and White wins the piece back. It's unlikely that anyone could calculate this variation.
Practically speaking, the text is clearly Black's best choice. He takes the long diagonal for his queen's bishop and vacates square d5 for the queen.

20.♘xf7

A brilliant idea that just fails to work. White should have settled for 20.exf7+ ♔g7 21.bxc3 ♕d5 22.♘f3, and the computer assesses the position as equal. But I understand why Aronian didn't like this. The white king remains exposed.

20...♕d5



21.♗xf6

White's intentions are becoming clear. He is suddenly threatening mate in one. But Black also has an attack.

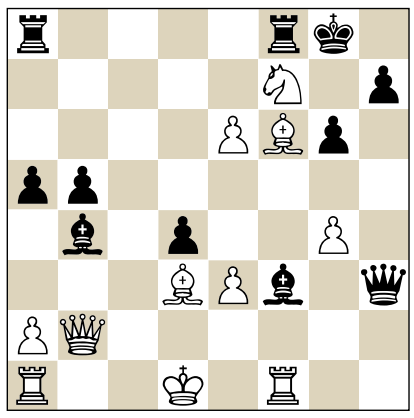
21...♕h1+ 22.♔f2 ♕xh3!

This is the only way to refute White's play. Black not only prevents the mate, but is now threatening mate himself, depriving White of time to reinforce his attack. But Ivanchuk had to calculate this variation even further.

23.♔e1 cxb2 24.♕xb2 ♗b4+

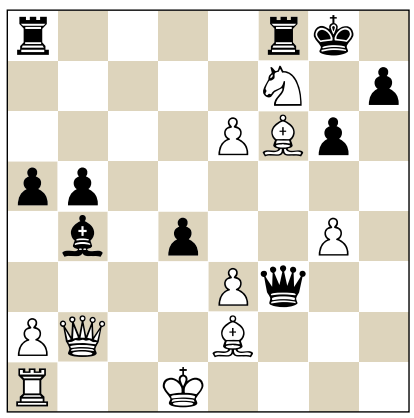
This check is also very important. After other moves White would have been better.

25.♔d1 ♗f3+



A second bishop check, cornering the white king. White has to give material to prevent mate.

26.♖xf3 ♕xf3+ 27.♗e2



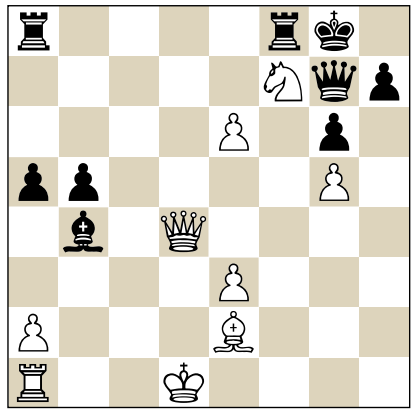
27...♕xf6 Ivanchuk must have calculated up to here. It had cost him an enormous amount of time, with the result that he was already in galloping time-trouble here.

Otherwise he would probably have seen that Black can continue his attack. After 27...♕h1+ 28.♔c2 ♕c6+ 29.♔d1 ♖fc8 he has a mating attack, while his king will eventually find shelter from the checks, e.g. 30.♘h6+ ♔f8 31.♗g7+ (there's no better) 31...♔xg7 32.♕xd4+ ♔f8 33.♕h8+ ♔e7 34.♕xh7+ ♔d8, and the black king escapes via c7.

28.g5

The only way to fish in muddy waters. Black must withdraw his queen to g7 to prevent White from taking over the attack.

28...♕g7 29.♕xd4

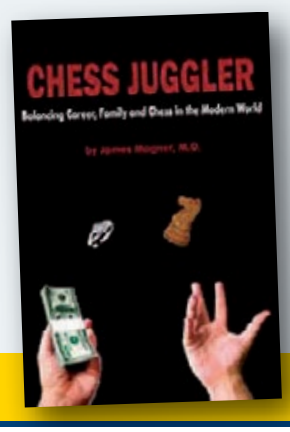


29...♖xf7

Panic. Ivanchuk apparently wants to eliminate the knight that's so close to his king, but the only result is that he exposes his king more.
With 29...♗c3, or the possibly even stronger 29...♗c5, he could have forced a queen swap, after which he would have a clearly winning position.

30.exf7+ ♕xf7 31.♖c1

White finally finds the time to deploy his rook. Less good was 31.♗xb5 in view of 31...♖c8 32.♕e4 ♖c5, and Black has a strong initiative.



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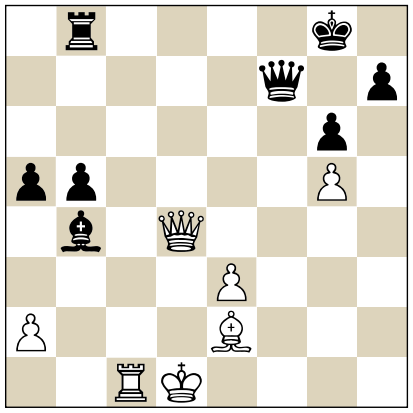
31...♖b8 Ivanchuk had less than a minute left here, without increments, but he kept his cool. It is important to cover his b-pawn.

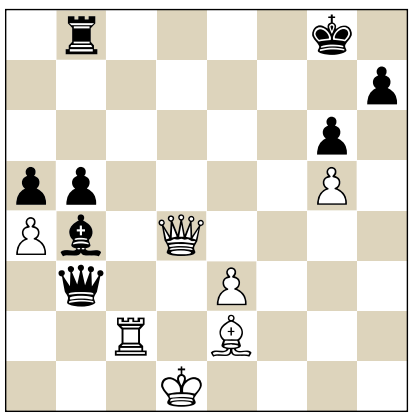


32.a4? Aronian had enough time left but seemed obsessed by Black's clock and made the well-known mistake of starting to blitz himself. The text is a blunder.

Correct was 32.♖c6, to create an escape hatch for the white king on b1, after which White will probably hold. Black must not play 32...♕xa2, in view of 33.♗f3, while 32...♗e7 can be met by 33.♖c7, since the bishop ending after 33...♖d8 34.♕xd8+ ♗xd8 35.♖xf7 ♔xf7 36.♗xb5 is not winning for Black: his kingside pawns are not strong enough.

32...♕b3+ Winning.

33.♖c2 ♕b1+ 34.♖c1 ♕b3+ 35.♖c2



35...♖c8 After repeating moves Black introduces a deadly pin.

36.♗c4+ Desperation.

36...bxc4 37.♕d5+ ♔f8 Another accurate move in extreme time-trouble. After 38.♕f3+ ♔e8 39.♕e4+ ♗e7 White would run out of checks.

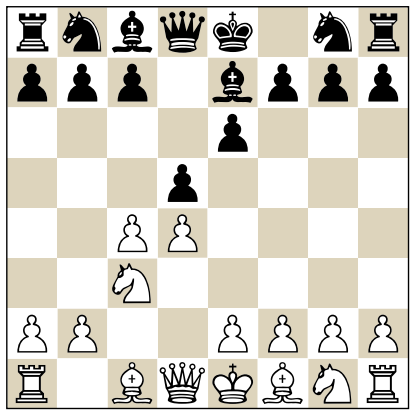
38.♕d7 ♖e8 White resigned.

NOTES BY
Hikaru Nakamura

QO 11.3 – D31
Hikaru Nakamura
Levon Aronian
Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2011 (8)

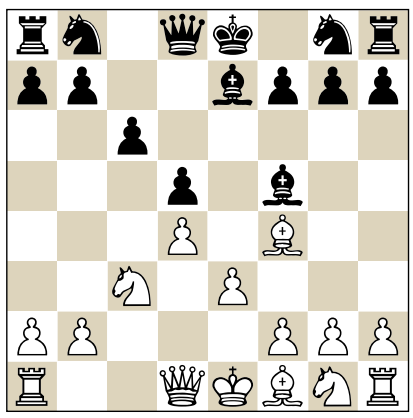
Prior to this game, I had been having a very solid tournament, but this victory was the highlight and made the tournament a complete success, despite everything that would occur in the following round.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗e7



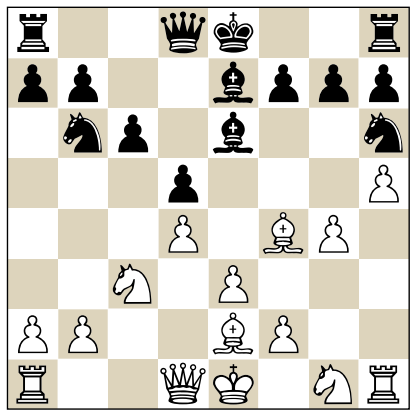
A big surprise. Levon up until recently has favoured the Slav. However, everyone, including myself, has been guilty of playing the Queen's Gambit Declined in top-level tournaments a lot lately.

4.cxd5 exd5 5.♗f4 c6 6.e3 ♗f5



7.g4 A new try. The last time I faced this variation, I played something which does not inspire confidence. After 7.♗d3 ♗xd3 8.♕xd3 ♘f6 9.♘ge2 ♘h5 10.♗xb8 ♖xb8 11.f3 0-0 12.0-0 f5 13.a3 a6 14.b4 ♕d7 Black was completely fine in Nakamura-Ponomariov, St. Louis 2011.

7...♗e6 8.h4 ♘d7 9.h5 ♘h6 10.♗e2 ♘b6

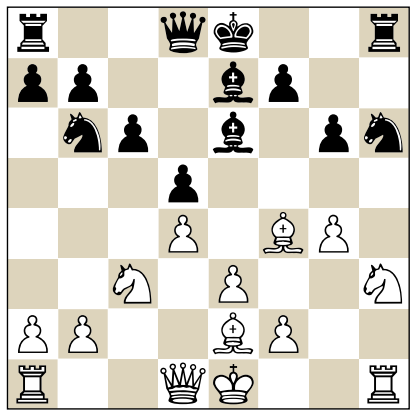


11.♘h3 After 11.♖c1:

A) 11...♗d6 12.♘h3 ♗xf4 13.♘xf4 ♗d7 14.♖g1 g5 15.hxg6 hxg6 16.♔d2 ♕e7 17.b3 g5 18.♘d3 0-0-0 19.♖h1 f6 20.♕g1 ♘f7 21.♕g3 ♕d6 22.♕xd6 ♘xd6 23.f3 ♖dg8 24.♘c5, and White stands better, as in Kasparov-Karpov from the famous World Championship match in 1985;

B) 11...♘c4! is an improvement over the old main line, when after 12.b3 ♘d6 13.♘h3 g5 14.♗e5 ♖g8 15.f3 f5 16.♘f2 ♘df7 17.♗h2 ♗d6 Black once again has absolutely no problems, as in Mchedlishvili-Döttling, France 2008.

11...g5 12.hxg6 hxg6



13.♗g3? It is a bit comical to give a novelty a question mark. During the game I vaguely recalled that 13.♗g3 was wrong. However, for some reason the thought of 13...♘xg4 did not occur to me, even when I used seven minutes to think about the move.

The previous try was 13.f3, but after 13...♗h4+ 14.♘f2 g5 15.♗h2 ♕e7 16.♕c2 f5 17.♗e5 ♖f8 18.0-0-0 ♘f7 White ended up significantly worse in Onischuk-Lputian, Poikovsky 2001.

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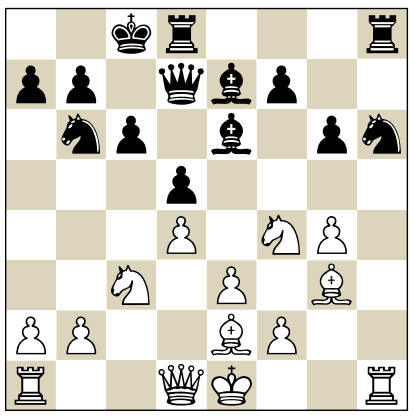
2 Vasily Ivanchuk	IGM	UKR	2765	0 0	* *	½ 1	1 ½	1 ½	1 0	15 2819
3 Hikaru Nakamura	IGM	USA	2753	½ ½	½ 0	* *	½ 1	½ ½	1 0	12 2785
4 Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2807	½ ½	0 ½	½ 0	* *	½ 1	1 ½	12 2774
5 Vishy Anand	IGM	IND	2817	½ ½	0 ½	½ ½	½ 0	* *	1 1	12 2772
6 Paco Vallejo	IGM	ESP	2716	1 0	0 1	0 1	0 ½	0 0	* *	10 2683
3 points for a win, 1 for a draw, 0 for a loss										

13...♕d7

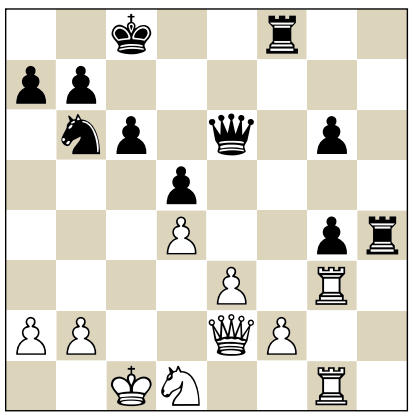
The refutation of my 'novelty' was 13... ♘xg4! 14.♗xg4 ♕d7 15.♗xe6 (15.f3 f5 16.♗e5 ♖h7, and Black is completely winning) 15...♕xe6 16.♕f3 ♖xh3 17.0-0-0 ♖xh1 18.♖xh1 0-0-0. Black is up a clean pawn and converting will only be a matter of technique.

14.♘f4 0-0-0

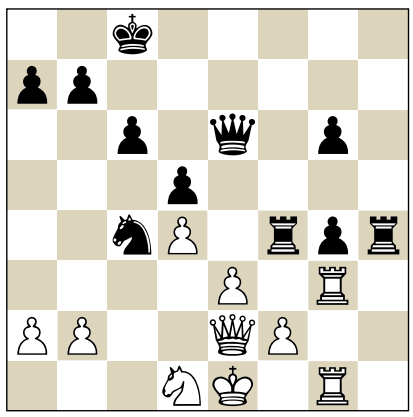


Now the question is if White can get the f3/e4 break in or not.

15.♘xe6 ♕xe6 16.♖g1 ♗d6 17.♕c2 ♗xg3 18.♖xg3 f5 19.0-0-0 ♘xg4 20.♗xg4 fxg4 21.♖dg1 ♖h4 22.♕e2 ♖f8 23.♘d1



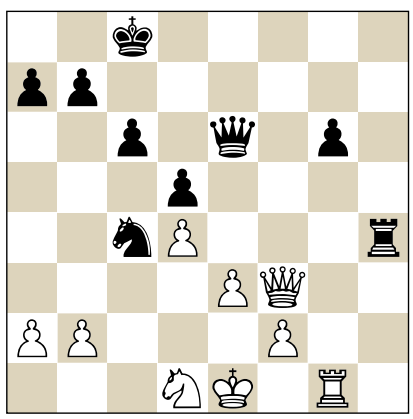
23...♖f4 Originally, when I first played 17.♕c2, I had overlooked this move, but luckily I have a nice resource. **24.♔d2 ♘c4+ 25.♔e1**



25...♖f3

According to the computers, Black is much better after 25...♖f6!. However, to the untrained human eye it is far from obvious. The line is 26.♖xg4 ♖h2 27.♖4g2 ♖xg2 28.♖xg2 ♕e7 29.♖h2 ♖f8, and Black is much better, as White has a very passive knight and an extremely bad king position.

26.♖xf3 gxf3 27.♕xf3



27...♕f5?

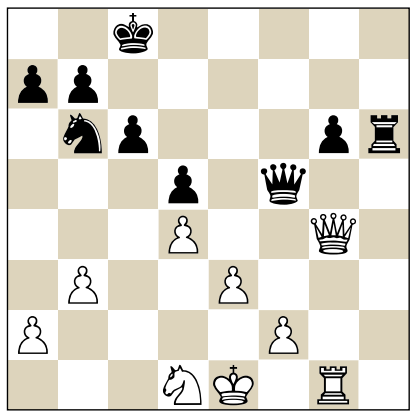
A serious inaccuracy. Prior to this move Levon had been moving relatively quickly and seemed very calm. I suspect he thought both 27...♕d6 and 27...♕e7 were much better for him. However, upon realizing the unpleasant reality he became very nervous and seemed to just lose the thread completely over the next few moves.

28.♕g3

Black's king is exposed, he has a weakness on g6 and my pawn-structure is better. One of the things I was trying to decide was whether it was better for Black to have his pawn on g6 or f5.

28...♖h6 29.b3 ♘b6 30.♕g4

Forcing a simplification. This should still objectively be a draw, but it becomes a difficult task.

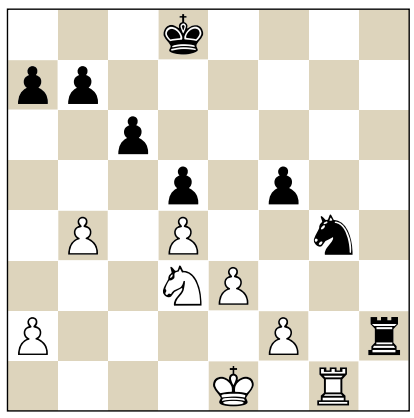


30...♘d7 I would prefer the endgame after 30...♕xg4 31.♖xg4 ♘d7 32.♔e2 ♘f6 33.♖g1 ♔d7 34.♘b2 ♔e6 35.♘d3 ♘d7, with the g-pawn as opposed to the f-pawn.

31.♕xf5 gxf5 32.♘c3

During the game I was worried that the endgame after 32.♘b2 f4!? 33.exf4 c5 would give Black better drawing chances.

32...♘f6 33.♘e2 ♘g4 34.♘f4 ♖h2 35.♘d3 ♔d8 36.b4



I have reached the ideal set-up. The computer still doesn't think the situation is very dire, but in practical terms this should be lost.

36...♔e7 37.a4 b6 38.♔e2 ♔d6 39.♔f3 a5 40.bxa5 bxa5 41.♔g3 ♔c7

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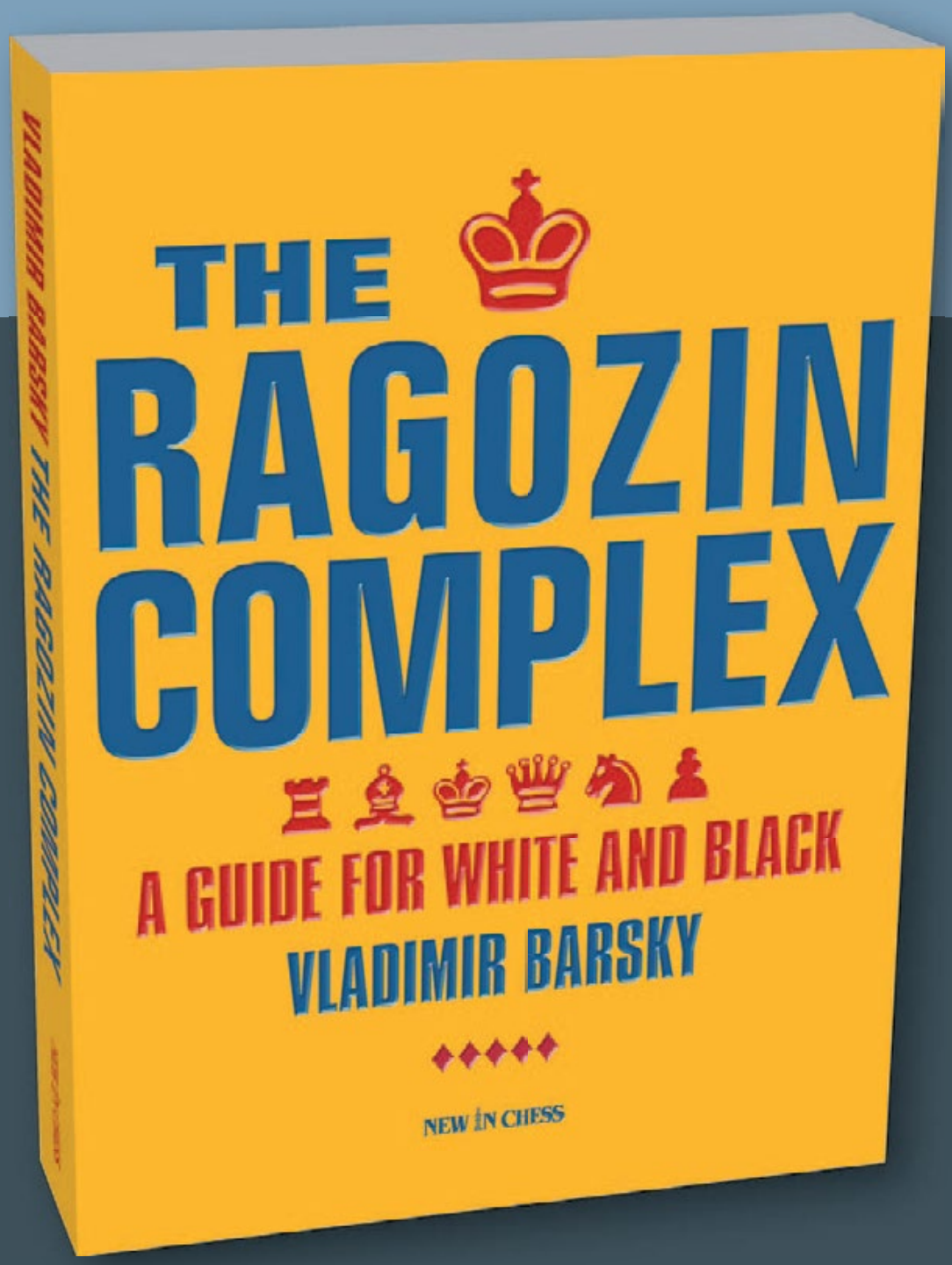

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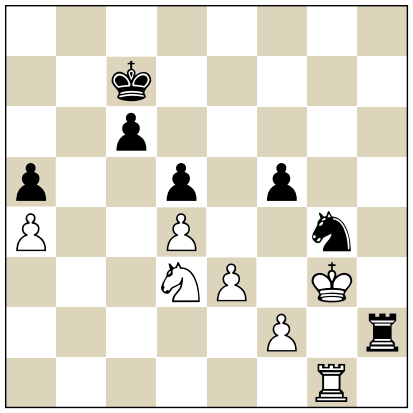
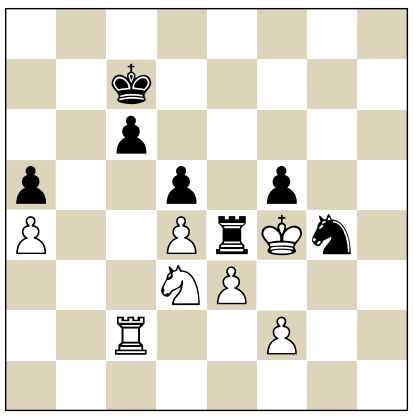


42.♖c1

42.f3! was a quicker way of winning. I rejected this during the game, as I was worried that, like in so many rook endings, there would be some magical defence. But after 42...♖e2 43.fxg4 ♖xe3+ 44.♔f4 ♖xd3 45.g5 ♖xd4+ 46.♔xf5 ♖d2 47.g6 ♖f2+ 48.♔g5 ♖f8 49.g7 ♖b8 50.♔f6 the white king will get back in time to stop the pawns.

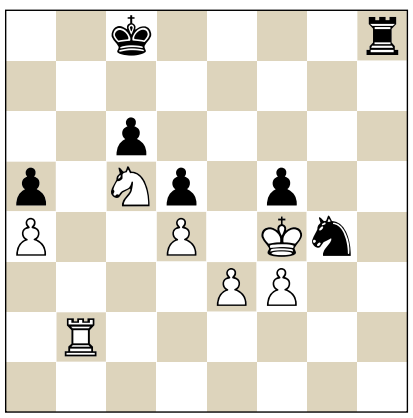
42...♖h7 43.♔f4 ♖e7 44.♖c2 ♖e4+



45.♔g5 I didn't go 45.♔xf5 because after 45...♖xe3 46.♘e5 ♘xe5 47.fxe3 ♘c4 48.♖c3 ♘b6 49.♖a3 ♘c4 I assumed it was still winning, but Black might be able to set up a fortress.

After the text-move Black's problems become insurmountable.

45...♖e8 46.♖b2 ♖f8 47.♘c5 ♔c8 48.♔f4 ♖h8 49.f3

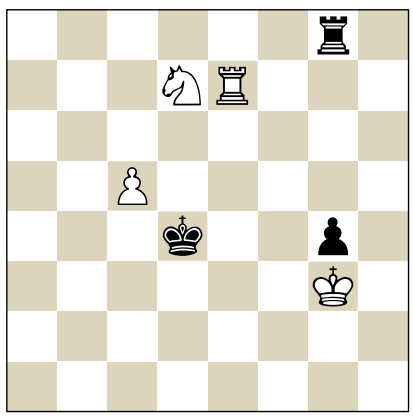


Hikaru Nakamura has Levon Aronian on the ropes and makes no secret of the fact that he knows he's winning.

49...♘h2

It is hard to recommend another move, but here the knight will be trapped and once I win it, the win will become easy.

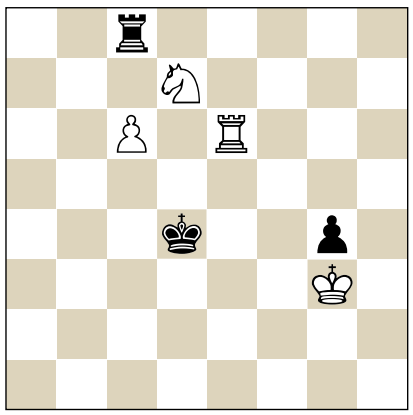
50.♖f2 ♖h3 51.♘b3 ♔c7 52.♘xa5 ♔b6 53.♘b3 ♔a6 54.♘c1 ♔a5 55.♘e2 ♔xa4 56.♘g1 ♖h6 57.♔g3 ♘g4 58.fxg4 fxg4 59.♖f5 ♖h1 60.♔g2 ♖h4 61.♘e2 ♔b5 62.♘f4 ♖h8 63.♔g3 ♖g8 64.♖e5 ♔c4 65.♖e6 ♔b5 66.♖e7 ♔b4 67.♘d3+ ♔c3 68.♘e5 c5 69.dxc5 d4 70.exd4 ♔xd4 71.♘d7



71...♖d8

The last try was 71...♖g6, but it is still not enough: 72.♖e2 ♔d5 73.♖d2+ ♔e4 74.♖d1, and wins.

72.c6 ♖c8 73.♖e6



73...♖c7

Black also loses after 73...♔d5 74.♘b6+ ♔xe6 75.♘xc8 ♔d5 76.♘a7 ♔d6 77.♔xg4 ♔c7 78.♔f5 ♔b8 79.♔e6 ♔xa7 80.c7 ♔b7 81.♔d7.

74.♖d6+ ♔c4 75.♔xg4 ♔b5 76.♘e5 ♖h7 77.♖d7 ♖h8 78.♔f5 ♔b6 79.♔e6

Black resigned. ■

SHANNON BAILEY

Everything Old

The World Chess Hall of Fame Re-Opens Across From the Glitzy Saint Louis Chess Club

AL LAWRENCE

The only two known Fabergé chess sets are both displayed on the second floor.

AL LAWRENCE

Jeanne Sinquefield cuts the ribbon to open the WCHOF. At left, Jeff Rainford (Chief of Staff to St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay), at right, Rex Sinquefield and Charlie Dooley (St. Louis County Executive).

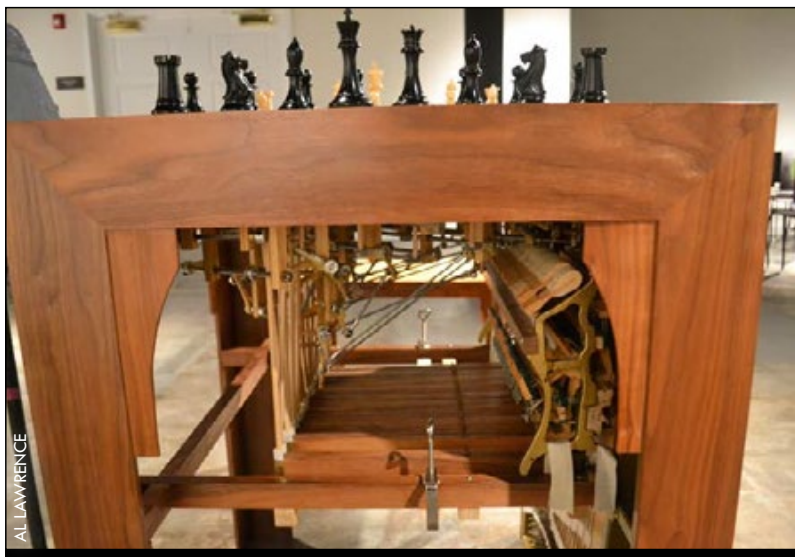
The U.S. 'Wall of Fame'. Each plaque honours one of the 29 inductees.

Is New Again

Al Lawrence

Lifting and packing in summer-heat inside the south-Florida storage unit – a double bin among rows and aisles of other rental spaces locked behind their metal-accordion doors – Gil Luna and I quickly sweated through our favourite 'Miami World Chess Hall of Fame' shirts. But there really wasn't a Miami Hall of Fame anymore. The contents of that impressive building, with its castle-turret entryway and chessboard-squared exterior, were stacked around us in hundreds of cartons. While we worked, we talked about the ceremonies and exhibitions that had drawn visitors from all over the world, as well as chess immortals Boris Spassky and Anatoly Karpov to their inductions.

It could have been a morose reunion for



Inside the 'Chess Piano'. Its levers and hammers sound a note with each move.

Chess Hall of Fame

Luna and me, the former curators of the Miami installation. But we were packing up to move the Hall to an exciting new home.

The Hall, started a quarter-century before in a subterranean room at the U.S. Chess Federation offices in New Windsor, New York (opened while I was USCF's Executive Director but accomplished by my predecessor Gerry Dullea), had found ever-improving venues in Washington, D.C., and Miami. It was now on the road to glamorous new lodgings, directly across the street from the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis, a chic salon in which you might expect to find James Bond playing Goldfinger for bullion at one of the corner tables.

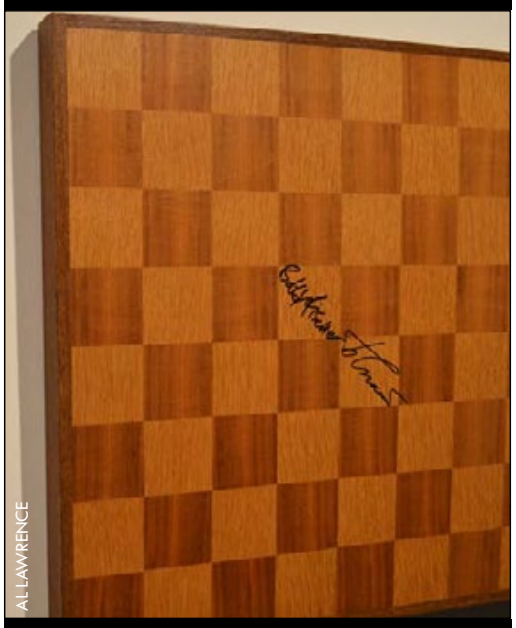
There, in the fashionable 'Central West End' of St. Louis, on a street lined with restaurants and coffee shops and close to the city's famous Forest Park attractions, chess sponsors Jeanne and Rex Sinquefield have since July of 2008 hosted the most important invitational events in the USA. Now they were adding the World Chess Hall of Fame to their hometown's lineup of chess attractions.

In just a bit more than a year after receiving the inventory from Miami, the Sinquefields had organized a staff of specialists, headed by Hall Director Susan Barrett and VP Shannon Bailey, acquired and remodeled a building, and installed three floors of special exhibitions. On September 8, an invitation-only first peek and induction ceremony kicked off a long weekend of celebrations.

The street between the club and the WCHOF was police-barricaded to allow for a real-American block party. More than 350 spectators – many from Europe as well as the Americas – crowded the outdoor space. Four days of sunny-but-comfortably-cool fall weather-sandwiched between the 40-degree-Celsius week previous and the torrential rains that held off until Wednesday-made respectful jackets and ties comfortable. (It's easy to get the feeling that the Sinquefields have the clout to arrange even meteorological events, at least in their hometown.)

The silver set presented to Paul Morphy, who wouldn't accept money, on his winning the first American Chess Congress in 1857.

Marcy and new U.S. Chess Hall of Famer GM Andy Soltis.



The board used in the third, 'backstage' game of the 1972 Fischer-Spassky match, autographed by both players.

New inductees

On Thursday, after the ribbon-cutting ceremony, three new members were inducted in an outside ceremony. From its beginnings in 1986 to the opening of the Miami installation in 2001, the Hall honoured the heroes of U.S. chess. With the Miami grand opening, FIDE began selecting its own honorees as well, putting the 'World' in World Chess Hall of Fame. On its top floor, the St. Louis building continues the tradition of having two 'walls of fame'.

With the inductions of GMs Boris Gulko and Andy Soltis, the U.S. side of the room sports 29 sparkling silver plaques, going back to Paul Morphy, recalling chiefly great players, but also writers, editors, problemists, and legendary leader Ed Edmondson, who pulled strings around the world to give Bobby Fischer his seat at the Reykjavik table. With the inclusion of Vera Menchik (FIDE's first woman inductee; the U.S. honours two), the world side of the room now immortalizes 16 superstars, all players. It was a welcome reboot to FIDE's inductions, which had stopped in 2008 with Siegbert Tarrasch.

Then the crowd got its first look inside. On the first of the three levels, besides a well-stocked museum shop, I found that the new Hall offers intriguing connections between chess, art and music with its 'Out of the Box, Artists Play Chess' exhibit, curated by Bradley Bailey. 'Anatomy is Destiny, The Wardrobe: A Game in Waiting', its title a takeoff on Sigmund Freud's famous gender-determines-personality pronouncement, dominates the space. Thirty-two suspended, movement-restricting costumes suggest the predetermined paths available to each chess piece. Liliya Lifanova's work is intended as performance art and is accompanied by a video of one

presentation. The work enacts a game between artist-turned-chess-master Marcel Duchamp and his alter ego, Rrose Sélavy (his pun on 'Eros, c'est la vie'). A half-dozen other works are displayed in the room, including a video celebrating the recreation of the legendary 'Turk' chess-playing automaton, and the all-white 'Play It By Trust' chess set by Yoko Ono.

Another exhibit, 'The Chess Piano', is a working musical instrument created by Dutch artist and filmmaker Guido van der Werve. Each move on the board strikes different notes – King's Gambit meets John Cage. On Tuesday night, the artist played FIDE master and concert keyboardist Matthew Bengtsson a game to the accompaniment of the string section of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, with its music director David Robertson conducting before a crowd of more than 100 in the Hall.

The second floor offered 'Chess Masterpieces, Highlights from the Dr. George and Vivian Dean Collection', curated by Larry List. The Deans have amassed more than 1,000 rare and beautiful chess sets over 50 years. Through a selection of 30 masterpieces, the exhibit is able to trace both the development of the game and its sets from 900 A.D. to the early 20th century. List adds a lot of interest for a player-oriented spectator like me by presenting each set in an actual game position contemporaneous to the art, along with notes to the complete contest. I was in awe of the likes of the 1905 House of Fabergé kalgon jasper and silver pieces, standing on a Siberian jade, silver-banded pedestal board (game position: Rotlewi-Rubinstein, 1907), one of only two chess sets known to be made by Fabergé. (Its mate is in the room as well!)

My prurient interest, and, of course, my love of history and art, was piqued by the Catherine the Great set, made from clear and wine-coloured amber from her royal mines in Kaliningrad, portraying Catherine, in deep-cut décolletage, and her lover and minister Prince Grigori Potemkin as king and queen (game position: Smith vs. Philidor, London, 1790).

GM Hikaru Nakamura plays the black king during the Boy Scout live chess game.

DIANE ANDERSON

Each new inductee receives a personal version of his or her plaque. GM Boris Gulko reads about his impressive career.

© DEAN COLLECTION 2010, RICHARD BEENEN PHOTOGRAPHY

The Catherine the Great Set, one of the masterworks shown in *Chess Masterpieces, Highlights from the Dr. George and Vivian Dean Collection.*

Chess history is on the top floor, and of course, it serves up the meat and potatoes of the meal for a chess player. Entering, I walked past a bust of my late friend Sidney Samole, the inventor and marketer of the first commercial chess computer, whose dream (and accomplishment, with the help of his son Shane) was to create a truly 'World' Chess Hall of Fame.

'Chess history is on the top floor, and of course, it serves up the meat and potatoes of the meal for a chess player. Entering, I walked past a bust of my late friend Sidney Samole.'

Just inside, I faced the array of silver plaques – each with a photo – paying homage to the world's greatest players. Walking farther, I noticed that these faces are, in turn, staring at the U.S. heroes across the room, perhaps remembering great battles between the teams. Morphy, Steinitz (who became a U.S. citizen) and Fischer are represented on both walls. Perhaps one day soon, Sammy Reshevsky will get his duplicate plaque as well.

Near the centre of the room gleams the famous Paul Morphy silver set, awarded at his winning the first American Chess Congress in 1857. It was the first acquisition for the Hall, purchased even before its 1986 opening

and kept in 'my' safe at USCF for its debut. The WCHOF has a huge treasure trove to choose from, and I suspect displays on this floor will rotate more quickly than those below, due to change on February 12. The chess set and board that Bobby Fischer and his teacher John Collins played together on rest next to the unique clock that Collins, noticing that young Bobby often lost track of time, had made for his pupil. Its special bell rings every 10 seconds. Later, Fischer was renowned for avoiding serious time pressure.

One of my other favourites is nearby: Kenneth Harkness' huge notebook from the 1950s, on which he developed the worldwide rating system now called after the man who tweaked it a bit and gave it credibility, Arpad Elo. (That's right, it's not an acronym!) I love this relic because it helps in a small way to correct an injustice – and because I remember how this incredible piece of work-product-history was unearthed from musty Federation records during my tenure, and then years later quite literally rescued from a garbage dumpster behind USCF offices by Bill Goichberg! Signed letters from world champions, rare books on chess, and other memorabilia are likewise exhibited.

Brand-new to the Hall's collection is the board on which the turning-point game of the 1972 Fischer-Spassky world championship match was contested. Bobby had gone down 0-2, and he insisted on playing the third game 'backstage', away from crowd and cameras. Part of the Sinquefields' private collection, the board is autographed by both champions and was purchased for more than $76,000 at an April auction in New York.

On Saturday the WCHOF was officially opened to the public and opening ceremonies conducted for the 'Kings vs. Queens' tournament (in which world-number-six Hikaru Nakamura, who moved to St. Louis because of its club, would face former woman's world champ Alexandria Kosteniuk on board one). Meanwhile, the Chess Collectors International Western Hemisphere Meeting gathered just down the street at the Chase Park Plaza Hotel. After lunch, these groups and other spectators formed yet another block party between the Club and the Hall as chess-playing NASA astronaut Gregory Chamitoff helped celebrate the Boy Scouts of America's adoption of the very first 'chess merit badge'. With nearly five million members, BSA is one of the largest youth organizations in the U.S. It offers about 130 merit badges, awards for completing an area of study. Hall of Famer Yasser Seirawan and former U.S. women's champ Jennifer Shahade emceed a live chess game acted out by uniformed Boy Scouts – with the help of Nakamura and resident club GM Ben Finegold, who took on the roles of the black and white kings. The game, a continuation of an adjourned contest Chamitoff played against 'Earth' while in orbit in the International Space Station, ended with Hikaru in perpetual check.

In its new home, the Hall has found a family of caregivers who know how to connect it dynamically with other noble pursuits of man. It has many to thank and many more to instruct and entertain in the coming years. The World Chess Hall of Fame has travelled a long way from humble beginnings in New York, to D.C., to Miami, to St. Louis – where everything old is new again. ■

Al Lawrence served as executive director of the U.S. Chess Federation during a decade of record growth and two world championships in the U.S. Later, he served as the volunteer executive director of the World Chess Hall of Fame and Sidney Samole Museum in Miami. He is the co-author, with GM Lev Alburt of a number of books. Their newest is Chess for the Gifted and Busy.

Charles Hertan

Forcing Moves

Dinosaur Denouements

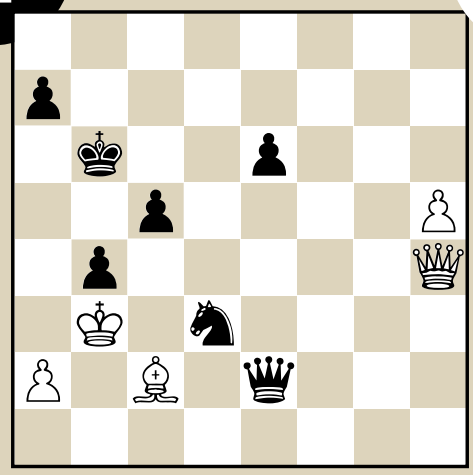
On the whole, 19th century masters fared best in the endgame by our standards. Surprisingly, this suggests that modern ideas and positional principles are more crucial earlier in the game. Even today's club players may cringe at the way leading masters like Winawer, Chigorin and Bird often arranged their pieces and pawns for battle. For example, it was still routine in Lasker's time to welcome the generally wretched structure of doubled isolated f-pawns + isolated h-pawn in front of one's king. This strange fetish was motivated by the aesthetic imperative to play for mate; attacking chances on the g-file were rated above structural defects. In endings the compulsion to attack subsided, replaced by a more sensible mode of play. Seirawan observed 'Good technique is good tactics!', and in this area the old-timers were less handicapped. Though today's students (rightly) value endgame theory highly, the 'dinosaurs' lost far more games to positional cluelessness, than to ignorance in this realm.

For each problem, the goal is to find the quickest and clearest winning line unless otherwise noted. A 'winning line' could range from checkmate to being a pawn up with no objective compensation for the opponent.

Level of difficulty:
1-4 stars, 1 is 'easiest' and 4 'most difficult'. The star rating refers to the difficulty of finding all the relevant variations, not just finding the right key move.

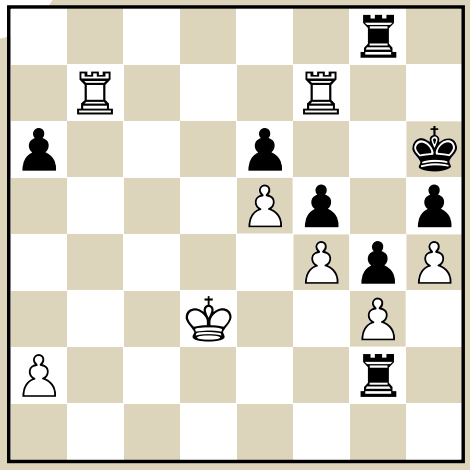
Solutions on page 85

1 ★★½☆



Black to move and win

2 ★★★½



White to move and win

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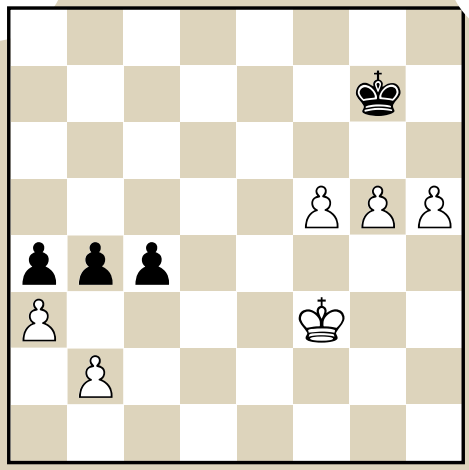
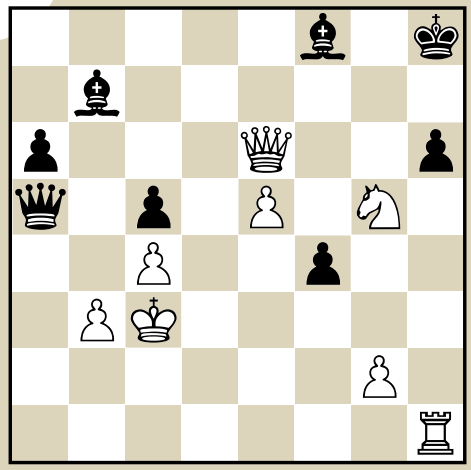


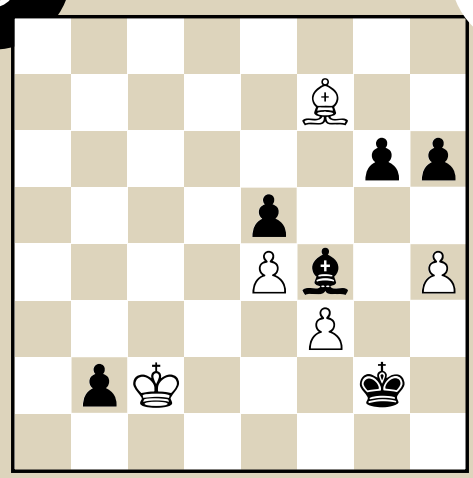
White to move and win

4 ★★★☆



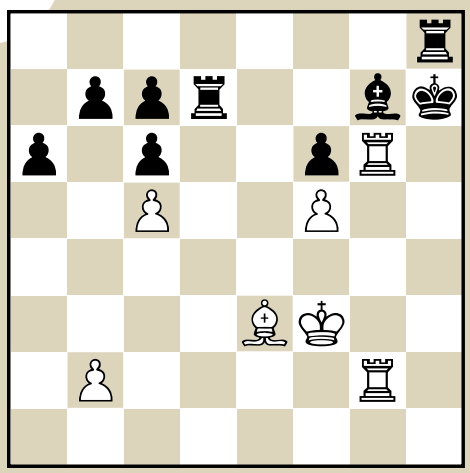
White to move and win

5 ★★★☆



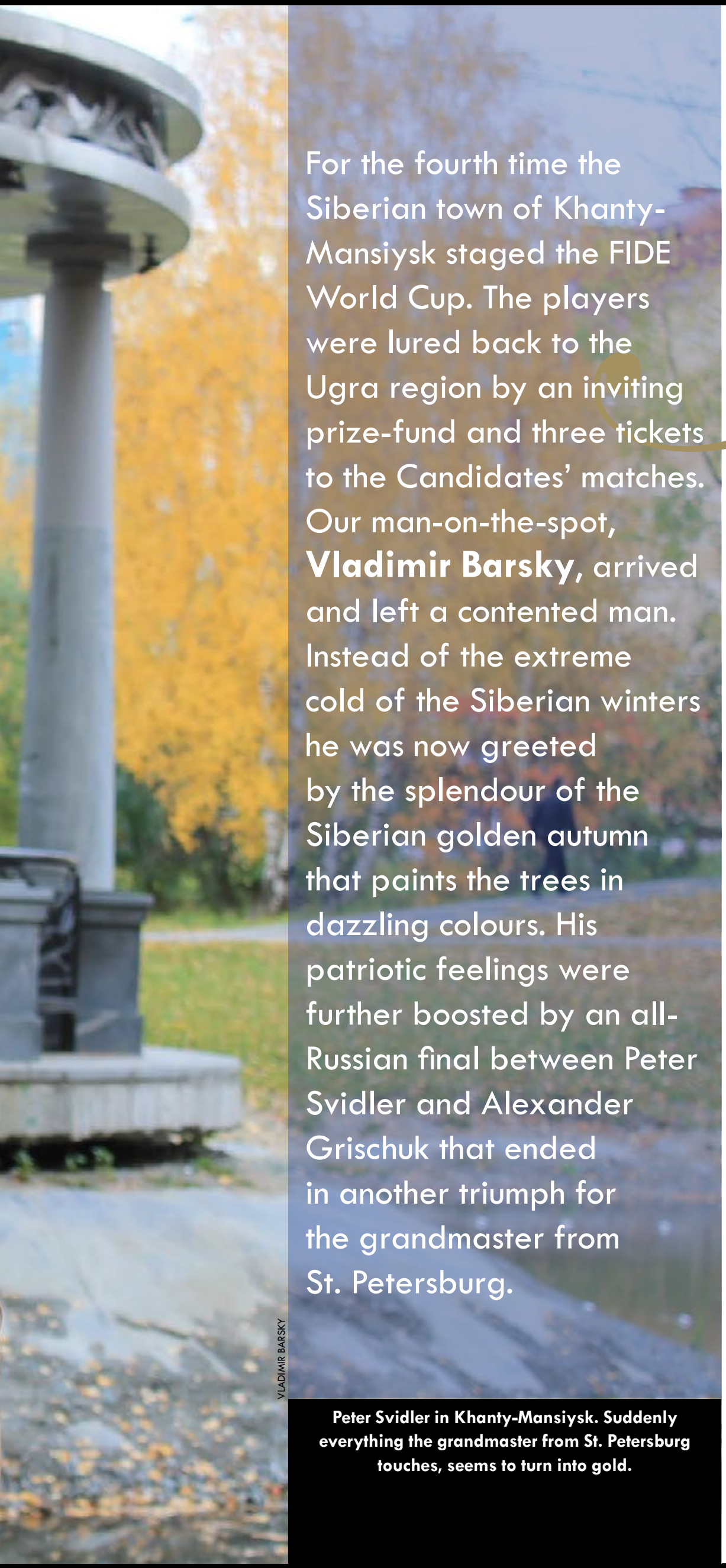
Black to move and win

6 ★★☆☆



White to move and win

One Cup and three Candidates



For the fourth time the Siberian town of Khanty-Mansiysk staged the FIDE World Cup. The players were lured back to the Ugra region by an inviting prize-fund and three tickets to the Candidates' matches. Our man-on-the-spot, **Vladimir Barsky**, arrived and left a contented man. Instead of the extreme cold of the Siberian winters he was now greeted by the splendour of the Siberian golden autumn that paints the trees in dazzling colours. His patriotic feelings were further boosted by an all-Russian final between Peter Svidler and Alexander Grischuk that ended in another triumph for the grandmaster from St. Petersburg.

VLADIMIR BARSKY

Peter Svidler in Khanty-Mansiysk. Suddenly everything the grandmaster from St. Petersburg touches, seems to turn into gold.

'I really love the Russian winter, but it's so good that this World Cup started at the end of the summer!' This remark, made by many a participant, I could understand only too well. I vividly remember my trip to Khanty-Mansiysk in December. The light, crunchy snow under my feet, the lights on the New Year trees, the wooden pieces in the main square: it was all a pleasure to look at and forced me to recall my carefree childhood! The next day it chilled to minus 25, then some more, often to minus 40, and the length of my walks decreased sharply... The World Cup takes almost a month and sitting in the same four walls all the time and going outside in short dashes – that's something else. At the same time, the golden autumn in Ugra is also extraordinarily beautiful, as I already found out at last year's Olympiad.

This time the playing venue had also changed. The tournament moved from the Children's Activities House to the ultramodern Ugra Chess Academy, which was built according to a design by Dutch architect Erick van Egeraat. They say he's very popular in the West, but it's difficult for me to judge that, and recently he's been working more often in western Siberia, where there's a lot of money for bold architectural projects. Van Egeraat claims that the academy is shaped like a stylized chess piece (without specifying which one). Perhaps if you look at the building from above you might find some similarity, but viewed from the street it reminds you more of an enormous predatory fish. Although I really like the interior of the academy: big windows in

the hall, high ceilings, wooden trimmings, a glass staircase on the first floor, glass lifts...

It's difficult to say whether such an incredible chess palace exists anywhere else in the world. The players turned out to be unanimous in their assessments: perhaps the playing hall was a little cramped for the first round when the field was still complete, but once the knock-out competition started to claim its victims everything was simply fantastic. At one of the press conferences Grischuk decided to entertain the audience a little and said that there were very low ceilings in the toilets at the Activities House, and once he bumped his head really hard, while at the Academy everything was fine with the ceilings. The female interpreter didn't try to convey the nuances of his comment and simply translated it as, 'I really like playing at the Academy because they have convenient toilets here.' 'So now they'll think I'm an idiot in the West', Alexander complained. After that he often spoke in two languages, Russian and English, as did some of the other players.

Every day there was a video broadcast of the games with commentaries by grandmasters. The Russian-speaking public was served by Sergey Shipov and international master Valery Yoshan (Alexander Khalifman, who had come to Ugra on his own business, replaced him for a few days), and English speakers were obliged by grandmasters Konstantin Landa and Anna Sharevich. This undertaking was apparently a big success, with over a million 'individual users' visiting the official website. The commentators invited the players to be their guests when they'd finished their games, and the latter gladly described the course of the battle. All the press conferences were also taped. A rich video archive of modern chess is gradually being created!

The tournament's formula didn't undergo any particular changes, but

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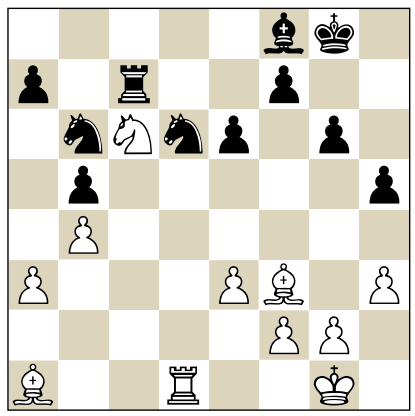
'It's difficult to say whether such an incredible chess palace exists anywhere else in the world.'

actually only 126 players came to Ugra. Shortly before the start Armenia's Vladimir Akopian broke his leg and stayed home, and the Chinese player Wang Hao withdrew at the very last moment because of heart problems. There seemed to be time for FIDE to invite the reserve players, but this didn't happen. It isn't good when someone has a head start over his rivals and starts playing in the second round (or even the third, as happened in Nalchik in 2008). I think FIDE can allow itself these small expenses, considering that it takes 20 percent of the prize fund (i.e. $320,000 out of the announced $1.6 million).

By the way, here's how much money the players took home: $4,800 for losing in the first round, $8,000 for the second, $12,800 for the third, $20,000 for the fourth, $28,000 for the fifth, $40,000 for the sixth, $64,000 for going out in the final, and $96,000 for the winner of the cup. Besides that, the first three prize-winners qualified for the Candidates' tournament, currently planned for the end of next year, which is why an additional match was played for third place. It's also important to point out that this time all the additional tiebreak matches consisted not of four games, but only two: first two 25-minute games, then with the score equal two 10-minute games, and then two five-minute games if necessary, and finally 'Armageddon'. So this time the longest tiebreak lasted for no more than six hours.

Round One

The main sensation of the first round was Peter Leko's loss to the young American grandmaster Sam Shankland.



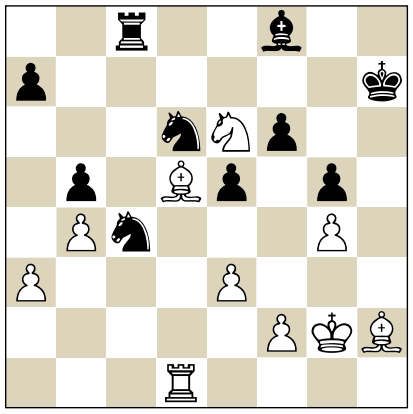
Leko-Shankland (1.1)
position after 34...♗f8

Leko got a comfortable advantage in the opening: the bishop pair and pressure on the queenside.

35.♗e5 ♘bc4 36.♗h2 f6 37.♘d8

Obviously Peter didn't want to part with his bishops, but now one of them is excluded from the game for a long time. After 37.♗xd6 ♘xd6 38.♘d8 it isn't possible to save the pawn: 38...e5? 39.♘e6 ♖d7 40.♗c6, and Black loses a piece. So 37...♗xd6 is better, but after 38.♘d4 a6 39.♘xe6 White is a pawn up and has good winning chances.

37...e5 38.♗d5+ ♔h8 39.♘e6 ♖c8 40.g4 hxg4 41.hxg4 g5 42.♔g2 ♔h7



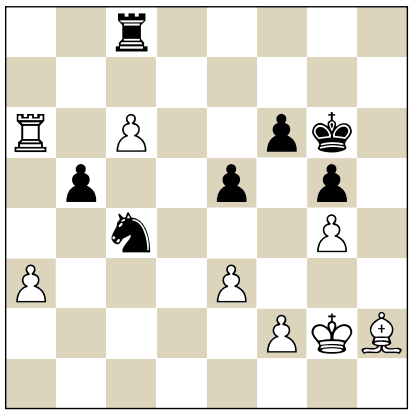
43.♗xc4?!

White takes the pawn in a much less effective way: he exchanges off his light-squared bishop, and his dark-squared one is still on the h2-square. He should have tried to activate it: 43.♖d3!? ♘b6 44.f4, and White's chances are much better.

43...♘xc4 44.♖d7+ ♔g6 45.♖xa7 ♖e8 46.♖a6

After 46.♘xf8+ ♖xf8 47.a4 bxa4 48.♖xa4 ♔f7 49.♗g1 ♖b8 50.f4 ♔e6 51.♔f3 White probably isn't winning, but he's certainly not losing.

46...♗d6 47.♘c5 ♗xc5 48.bxc5 ♖c8 49.c6



White got the extra pawn at a high price: the h2 bishop deserves sympathy.

49...♔f7 50.♗g1 ♔e6 51.f3 ♔d6 52.c7+ ♔e7 53.f4

Leko again refuses a draw, which was most simply achieved after 53.♖a7 ♔d7 54.e4 ♖xc7 55.♖xc7+ ♔xc7 56.♗c5. Was he really still hoping to pull a fast one on his opponent somehow?

53...♖xc7 54.fxg5 fxg5 55.♗f2 e4!

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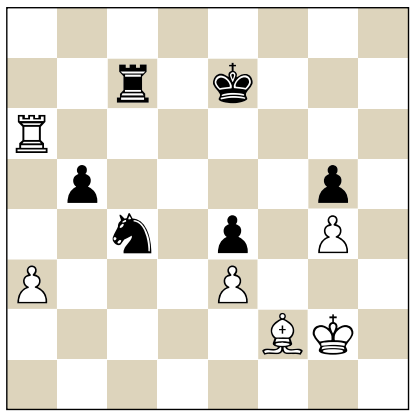
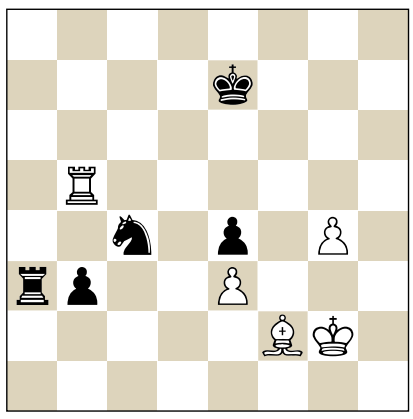
Peter Leko arrives for his second game against Sam Shankland. Playing with the black pieces the Hungarian chose a sharp Benoni, but could not undo the damage done in the first game.



56.♖g6

Obviously by this point Peter understood everything and offered a draw, but he came up against a refusal. Black can already play for a win without any particular risk.

56...♖c5 57.♖a6 ♖d5 58.♔f1 ♖d1+ 59.♔g2 ♖d3 60.♖g6 ♖xa3 61.♖xg5 b4 62.♖b5 b3



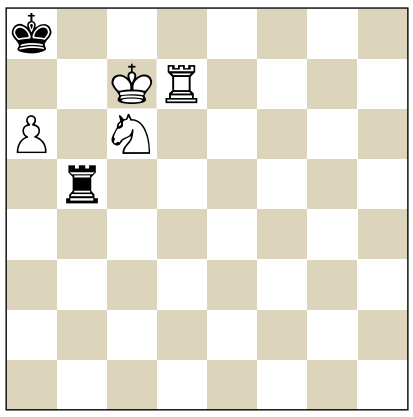
63.♖b7+

As grandmaster Sergey Shipov pointed out, White could still save himself: 63.♗e1! (threatening check from b4) 63...♔d7 64.♗c3 ♘xe3+ 65.♔g3 ♔c6 66.♖b8 ♘d1 67.♗g7! (the only square for the bishop. 67.♗f6? b2+ 68.♔f4 ♖f3+, 67.♗d4 ♔d5 or 67.♗h8 b2+ 68.♔f4 e3 69.♔f3 ♖a8! lose) 67...b2+ 68.♔f4 e3 69.♔f3, and a 'rook and knight versus rook' endgame is the prospect that awaits us.

63...♔e6 64.g5 ♔f5 65.♖b5+ ♔g6 66.♗e1 b2 White resigned.

Leko advocates a classical approach to chess and he doesn't have any offbeat openings in his repertoire, which are essential in order to fight for a win as Black when your opponent is trying to make a draw. Trying to play in a style that wasn't his own, Peter got into a difficult position in the second game and was forced to offer a draw. And Sam Shankland experienced his moment of glory when the *New York Times* called and wrote about his sensational victory. True, in the next round the triumphant one lost to Indian grandmaster Abhijeet Gupta, but that was no longer so important...

We'll point out a few more unexpected results. The second player on the Chinese team, the hard-to-beat Wang Yue, lost to the young Brazilian Alexandr Fier. The 18-year-old Ukrainian Yaroslav Zherebukh beat his far more seasoned compatriot Pavel Eljanov. Experienced Russian grandmaster Vladimir Malakhov lost to the Argentinean Ruben Felgaer. The most amusing episode of the first round occurred in that match.



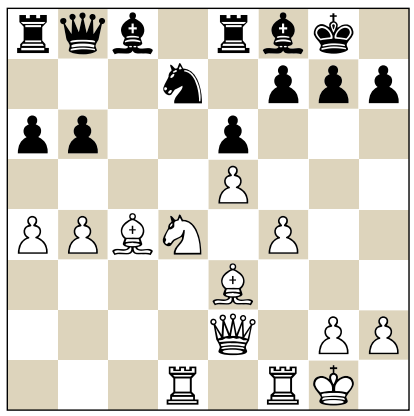
Felgaer-Malakhov (1.3)
position after 117.♔c7

Both of their 'classical' games ended in a draw, and this was the first rapid game. Obviously Black's first hope is for stalemate. So he puts his rook under fire: **117...♖d5** White doesn't take it, of course, but replies very poorly: **118.♖h7??** To win it's enough to put the rook under the defence of the knight – 118.♖e7 ♖d7+ 119.♔b6. It's also possible to prevent the stalemate immediately – 118.♘b4. **118...♖d7+! 119.♔xd7** and it's still stalemate!

It would have seemed that, inspired by his miraculous salvation, Malakhov, playing White, wouldn't leave his opponent any chances. But it all went precisely the opposite way: Felgaer caught the Russian grandmaster in his home preparation and won confidently.

Round Two

In the second round there were further prominent victims. Alexey Shirov, Michael Adams and Sergei Movsesian all left the tournament. Shirov lost twice to the Russian Vladimir Potkin, this year's European Champion.



Potkin-Shirov (2.1)
position after 21...♗f8

Black played poorly out of the opening and came under attack.

22.f5! ♘xe5

22...♕xe5 also loses due to 23.fxe6 fxe6 24.♘xe6!. Now on 24...♖xe6 there follows 25.♕f3, and on 24...♔h8 – 25.♘g5 ♕xe3+ 26.♕xe3 ♖xe3 27.♘f7+ ♔g8 28.♘d8+ ♔h8 29.♖xd7 and so on.

23.♗f4 ♗d6

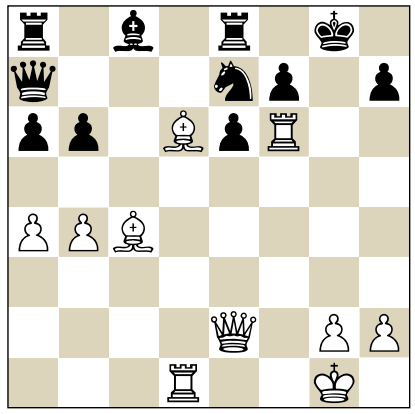
Or 23...exf5 24.♘c6.

24.♘c6 ♘xc6 25.♗xd6 ♕a7 26.f6 Now there's no one who can come to the aid of the black king.

26...gxf6 27.♖xf6

27.♕g4+ ♔h8 28.♕h4 also won, with the subsequent involvement of the rook on the third rank.

27...♘e7



28.♖xf7!

An elegant final blow. On 28...♔xf7 there follows 29.♖f1+ ♔g8 30.♗xe6+ ♗xe6 31.♕xe6+ ♔h8 32.♗e5 mate, so Black resigned.

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During the same championship that Potkin won, many players basically declared a boycott of one of the participants, the Frenchman Sébastien Feller, accusing him of cheating. The Feller case is now being considered in court (and will probably be considered for a very long time), his guilt hasn't been proven, and he continues to play in tournaments. So he came to Khanty-Mansiysk and overcame Viorel Iordachescu in the first round. And in the second an encounter with Alexander Grischuk awaited him.

It was interesting for me to see if Feller would find himself in isolation during the World Cup, if any protests would be made against him. No, nothing happened. Feller socialized a lot and in a very relaxed manner, with Etienne Bacrot, for example, and with other players, too.

Grischuk struggled against Feller as Black, with some difficulty defending an endgame a pawn down, and as White he offered a draw even in the opening – just as he did to Kramnik in Kazan. Next the Russian won both the rapid games confidently. I asked Sasha if he was distracted by unrelated thoughts about his opponent. He replied that Feller was very obviously playing by himself in the World Cup. 'Besides, if you think about those things all the time, you can't play at all. So I relied on Providence!', Grischuk laughed.

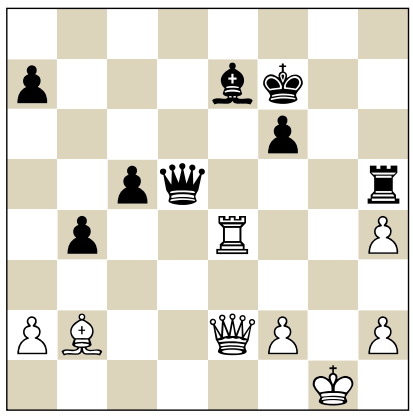
VLADIMIR BARSKY

Chief arbiter Faik Gasamov listens in silence as David Navara explains to his baffled opponent Alexander Moiseenko why he has suddenly offered a draw in a completely winning ending.

Round Three

This round the participation of rating favourite Sergey Karjakin ended – he was beaten by the magnificent Judit Polgar. Vasily Ivanchuk, after losing as White to Emil Sutovsky, was able to level the scores, and then came out on top in the tiebreak. For chess content the most interesting match was the one between Alexander Grischuk and Alexander Morozevich – or to be more precise, the first game of it, as the second one wasn't really anything, when Morozevich offered a draw after a mere 12(!) moves, mysteriously resigning himself to elimination. That first game you will find annotated below by the winner.

And for non-chess reasons the episode from the match between David Navara from the Czech Republic and Alexander Moiseenko from Ukraine will be remembered for a long time. This is, in short, what happened. In the second normal time-control game (the first had ended in a draw) Navara touched two pieces simultaneously.



Moiseenko-Navara (3.2)
position after 35.♕e2

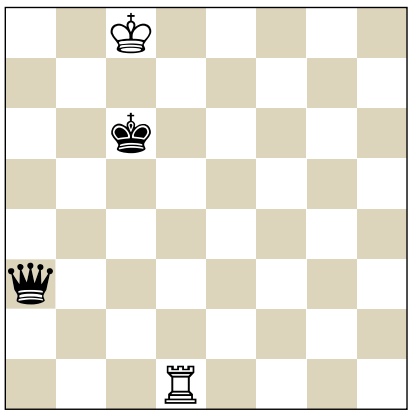
In this position there followed the move **35...♗d6**, but Navara accidentally clipped his king while doing this. On the video recording it's clearly visible that Black immediately went for his bishop and made his move specifically with it, i.e. if the king was even touched, it was obviously unintentional (the touch-move rule doesn't apply in this case, as the touch was accidental). But Moiseenko admonished his opponent for his slip-up. Did he want to force Black to move his king? Unlikely. Alexander asserted afterwards that he did this purely automatically, in the heat of the battle. Navara immediately stopped the clocks and called the arbiter. The situation was resolved instantly and the game continued. I'm sure that both Moiseenko and the arbiters quickly forgot about this trivial incident. But Navara remembered. And he racked his brains: had he behaved correctly?

For those who don't know, David Navara is a peculiar, exceptionally considerate person, and you won't find anyone else remotely like him in the chess world. He always turns his face and smiles when people want to take his picture. He never misses

an opportunity to say 'excuse me' for a reason or without one. He always came to press conferences himself without any reminders and translated for himself from Russian to English. And his route from the hotel to the club deserves its own description.

One day we came out of the hotel at the same time, and as usual I turned right to go across the car park. David went dead straight – I was even afraid that he might have forgotten the way. It turned out that 10 metres from the steps there was a pavement (!) that none of the chess players had seen any use for. Further along the route to the club we had to cross a quiet little street. Usually we crossed it with a long diagonal to shorten our journey a little – cars appeared there once an hour. David looked for a pedestrian crossing. And he's like that with everything: a very correct, good person. At the same time, which is nice, he isn't a bore, he has a good sense of humour.

In the game against Moiseenko, Navara increased his advantage, and at a certain point the affair came down to a 'queen versus rook' endgame. White's position gradually became hopeless.



Black had just played **114...♔d6-c6** (after which mate or losing the rook are inevitable), and... offered a draw! Right, only Navara would be capable of such a thing! Here's how he explained his behaviour: 'I didn't want people to say that I got that point unfairly!'

The story had some resonance in the media, and the governor of Ugra Natalia Komarova established a 'Fair Play' prize, which was presented to Navara and Moiseenko at a ceremony. Of course, from the point of view of the rules of chess this episode wasn't even worth a brass farthing. I agree with Svidler, who stated bluntly that he didn't share the general rapture about the 'players' chivalrous behaviour': 'There are FIDE rules that determine how to conduct yourself in a touch-move situation. Everyone understands that the touch happened completely accidentally, David didn't intend to move his king. The arbiters should have settled this situation, which basically, in my opinion, shouldn't have arisen. At the same time, Peter added, 'the clamour that kicked up around it attracted attention to chess, and that can't be bad.'

Navara won in the tie-break. But if he'd lost? Would his colleagues have pointed at him and called him an eccentric?

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NOTES BY
Alexander Grischuk

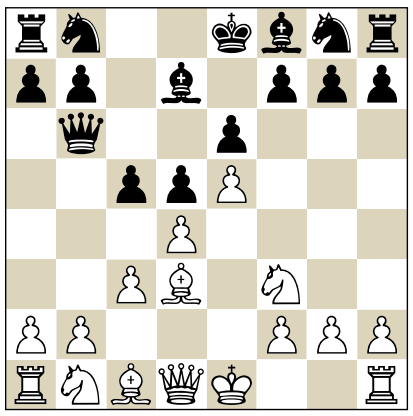
FR 3.3 – C02
Alexander Grischuk
Alexander Morozevich
Khanty-Mansiysk 2011 (3.1)

In the third round I was rather unlucky with the pairings. Alexander Morozevich has always been one of the strongest grandmasters in the world. In recent years he suffered a series of misfortunes, and his rating even dropped below the 2700 mark. However, after taking a long break he returned, and in all three tournaments played after his return his performances have been above 2800. So that I was under no illusions – despite the absurd figure 2693 (or something similar) attached to my opponent's name, I realized perfectly well that in standard this was an opponent worthy of the final.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5

At one time this move brought me a mass of memorable victories and defeats, but for some reason (I don't now remember exactly why) since 2004 I have played this only once in a classical game: in the 2010 Super Final against Nikita Vitiugov.

3...c5 4.c3 ♗d7 5.♘f3 ♕b6 6.♗d3!?



If I am not mistaken, Peter Svidler and I thought up this move in 2002. There are two main ideas: 6...♗b5 7.dxc5! ♗xc5 8.b4 (Grischuk-Vaganian, Mainz 2004), and:

6...cxd4 7.♘xd4!

7.cxd4 ♘c6 transposes into an unfavourable position for White, known since the time of Nimzowitsch.

7...♗c5

As far as I remember, we considered this move to be virtually a blunder in view of 8.♕g4, but during the game I realized that then 8...♘e7 would follow, leading to an excellent version for Black of the Winawer Variation with the sacrifice of the g7 and h7 pawns. After a short think (less than half an hour!) I found the move in the game, which gives White an enduring initiative and which also turned out to be a novelty.

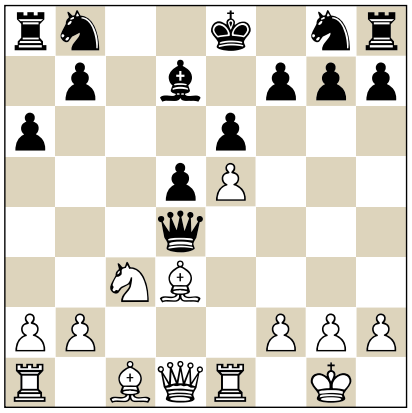
8.0-0! ♗xd4

Here too 8...♘e7 is possible, but then 9.♘f3 (9.♘b3 ♗b5) is interesting, with a cunning trap: 9...♗b5?? 10.b4.

9.cxd4 ♕xd4 10.♘c3 a6

10...♘c6 11.♘b5 ♕xe5 leads to great complications.

11.♖e1



11...♗c6

It is important that if 11...♘e7 White plays 12.♗e3! ♕xe5 13.♗c5 ♕f6 14.♗xe7 ♕xe7 15.♘xd5 ♕d6, and now he has to choose between the flamboyant but in fact rather barren 16.♗e4 exd5 (16...♘c6 17.♘f6+ ♔e7 18.♕xd6+ ♔xd6 19.♖ad1+ ♔e7 20.♘xd7) 17.♗xd5+ ♗e6 (17...♔d8 18.♕b3) 18.♕b3 0-0 19.♗xe6 ♘c6 20.♗d5, and the more ambitious 16.♕h5 ♔f8 17.♘c3 ♘c6 (17...♕xd3 18.♕c5+ ♔g8 19.♖ad1 ♕g6 20.♕c8+) 18.♖ad1.

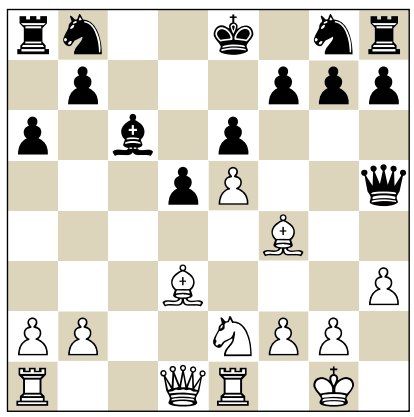
12.♘e2!

Now nothing is given by 12.♗e3 ♕xe5.

12...♕g4

After 12...♕xe5 13.♘g3 ♕c7 14.♕g4 ♔f8 15.♘h5 White has crushing threats.

13.h3 ♕h5 14.♗f4

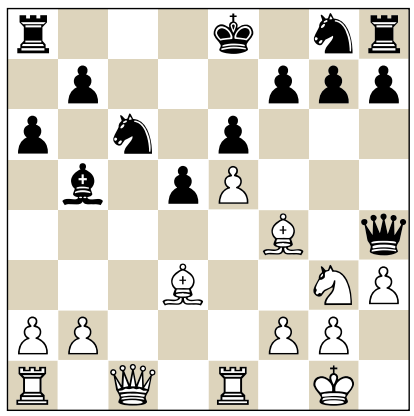


14...♗b5!

The alternative 14...♘e7 leads after 15.♕d2 h6 16.a4 to a position in which White has overwhelming compensation for the pawn. The move played (which, incidentally, did not even occur to me during the game) is far more critical, more interesting and even stronger, despite what the computer says.

15.♕b3?

Alas. On encountering a surprise – Black tries to exchange his only developed piece (the queen isn't a piece, the queen is a queen!) – I failed to find the only and very elegant refutation of Black's idea: 15.♕c1!! ♘c6 16.♘g3 ♕h4,



and now 17.♗e4!! (17.♗f5 is interesting, but not so strong) 17...h6 (17...♕d8 18.a4 ♗c4 19.♗b1 or 19.♗c2) 18.♗xd5 ♘ge7 19.♗f3 0-0 20.♘e4 ♘d4 21.♗g4 ♘g6 22.♗g3 ♕e7 23.♘d6 with a big advantage.

15...♘e7 16.♗xb5+ axb5 17.♕xb5+ ♘bc6 18.♕xb7

Fritz 13
Let's Check

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System requirements: Minimum:
Pentium III 1 GHz, 1 GB RAM, Windows Vista, XP (Service Pack 3), DirectX9 Graphics card with 256 MB RAM, DVD-ROM drive, Windows-Media Player 9 and internet access to activate the program, playchess.com, Let's Check and Updates.

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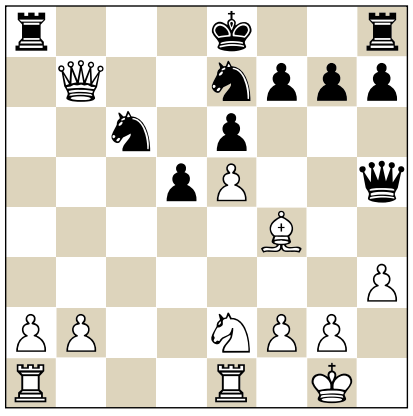


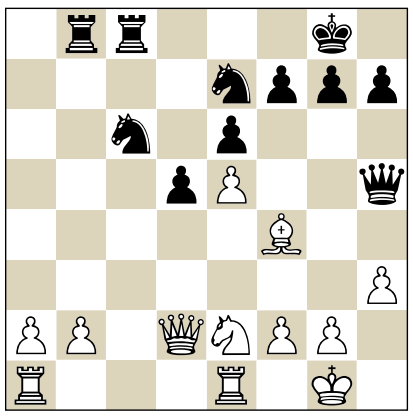
18...0-0?!

Even now it is not altogether clear to me why, but the computer insists that it is much more accurate to play 18...♖b8 19.♕a6 0-0 (but not 19...♖xb2?? 20.♘d4 ♘xd4 21.♕a8+ ♔d7 22.♕a7+! ♔e8 23.♕xd4) 20.♕a3, and now 20...♖fc8 (or 20...♕f5, in both cases with a slight advantage to Black) 21.♖ac1 ♖a8 22.♕e3 ♖cb8.

19.♕b3 ♖ab8?!

Chasing the white queen. Here too Black should have chosen between 19...♕f5 and 19...♖fc8.

20.♕c3 ♖fc8 21.♕d2



Strictly speaking, this was the position I was aiming for when on the 15th move I took the pawn bait. I thought that, although it is much easier for Black to play, objectively White should have some advantage. Apparently that is indeed the case.

21...h6 22.♖ac1 ♕h4 23.b3

An ordinary, solid, human move. But 23.♖c3! g5 24.♖g3! ♔f8 25.♖g4! ♕h5 26.♗h2 ♕g6 27.f4 was stronger.

23...♘f5

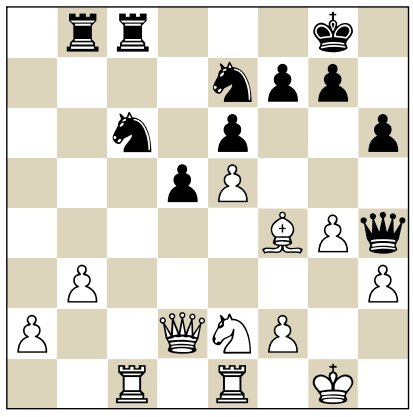
Preparing ...g5. After the immediate 23...g5 there is the good reply 24.♗e3.

24.g4!

Passive play is no good: 24.♖c2 g5 25.♗h2 ♘cd4 with splendid compensation for the pawn (weaker is 25...♕b4 26.♖ec1 ♕xd2 27.♖xd2).

24...♘fe7

Here we each had about 3 minutes left, which in combination with a complex position, lacking any guidelines, transformed the rest of the play to the time control into a regular street fight. With a number of underhand blows, crude devices and a mass of non-optimal actions.



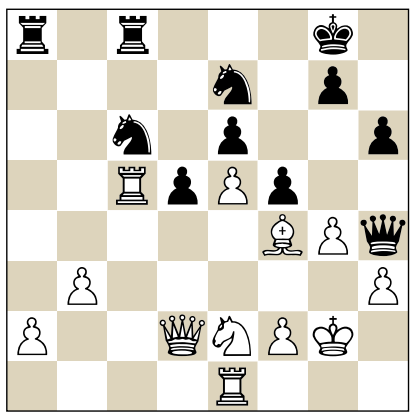
25.♔g2

The computer insists on 25.♗g3 ♕g5 (25...♕xh3?! 26.f3 ♘g6 27.♔f2 ♘cxe5 28.♖h1 ♘xg4+ 29.fxg4 ♕xg4 30.♗xb8 ♖xb8 would not be bad in time-trouble) 26.f4 (I prefer 26.♖ed1) 26...♕g6 27.f5 (I hope that the day when such a thing occurs to me will never come).

25...♖a8 Hmm, a strange move, I thought. It would appear that a2 is perfectly well defended.

Objectively stronger was 25...♘g6 26.♗g3 ♕d8 27.f4, and now either 27...d4, 27...h5 or 27...♖a8, but in such a position it is time to forget about objectivity.

26.♖c5 f5!!



Oops, *that* is why ♖a8 was necessary!

27.gxf5??

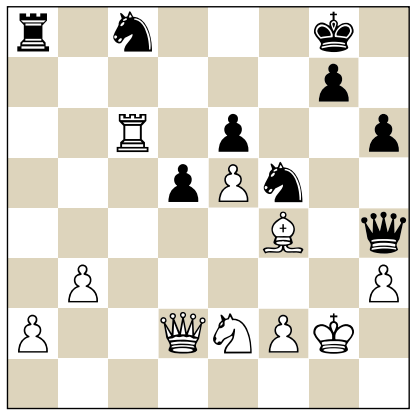
In the 2-3 remaining minutes I failed to recover from the shock, and in the final seconds I captured the damned pawn in the first way that came to hand. If I were a trainer, and a pupil of mine were to play this, I would tear off not only his arms, but probably other parts of his body as well. Fortunately, Sasha Riazantsev is a more gentle person, and I was able to continue the tournament intact.

Of course, I should have played 27.exf6 ♕xf6, and now, when the black knights have no strong points and the white king is far more securely defended, several ways should lead to a win. For instance, 28.♖ec1 (or 28.♗g3 e5 29.b4) 28...e5 29.♗g3 e4 30.b4 ♖d8 (30...♖f8 31.♖xc6) 31.b5 ♘e5 32.♗xe5 ♕xe5 33.b6 ♖ab8 34.♖b5 ♘g6 35.♕d4 ♘h4+ 36.♔h1 ♕g5 37.♖c7 ♘f3 38.♕c3.

27...♘xf5 28.♖ec1 ♘ce7 29.♖xc8+ ♘xc8

It was this that I overlooked, automatically assuming that the exchanges on the c-file would lead to the exchange of all four rooks.

30.♖c6



30...♕e7

During the game I did not like 30...♘ce7 31.♖xe6 ♖f8 32.♕d3 ♕h5, with a mass of threats, but in fact the strongest was 30...♕d8!!. Excuse me for not dwelling on this move.

31.♕c2 ♕e8 32.a4!

Misfortunes never come singly. Although Ian Nepomniachtchi would express it more simply: 'Trick your way out!' Speaking seriously, White's

VLADIMIR BARSKY

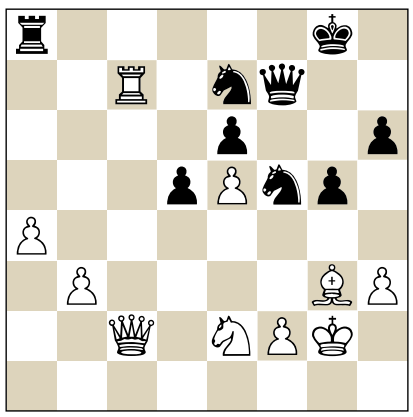
Alexander Grischuk ground down Alexander Morozevich despite a serious mistake on the 27th move. 'If I were a trainer, and a pupil of mine were to play this, I would tear off not only his arms, but probably other parts of his body as well.'

only chance of safeguarding his king is to promote his a-pawn to a queen, and win at least the rook for it.

32...♕g6+

The immediate 32...♘ce7 was more cunning: 33.♖c7, and now, say, 33...♖d8.

33.♗g3 ♘ce7 34.♘f4 ♕f7 35.♖c7 g5 36.♘e2



36...♖f8

A fundamental mistake. Alexander wants to give a 'point blank' mate, but for this Black does not have sufficient resources. It was essential to include the d-pawn in the play with 36...d4!, at the same time vacating a square for the knight on e7: 37.♕d3 ♕e8 with immense complications.

37.a5 h5

37...♘e3+ does not work, in view of 38.fxe3 ♕f1+ 39.♔h2 ♖f2+ 40.♗xf2 ♕xf2+ 41.♔h1 ♕f3+ 42.♔g1 ♕xe3+ 43.♔g2, but even so 37...d4 should have been played, in passing setting a veiled trap: 38.a6 ♘e3+ 39.fxe3 ♕f1+ 40.♔h2 d3 41.♕xd3 ♖f2+ 42.♗xf2 ♕xf2+ 43.♔h1 ♕f1+, with a draw. 38.♕d3 is correct, but even here, after 38...♕e8 (38...♘e3+ 39.♔h2! ♘f1+ 40.♔g1!) there is still all to play for.

38.♕d2 ♕g6 39.a6 h4 40.♗h2 g4 This was Black's last chance to advance his passed pawn: 40...d4!.

41.♘f4

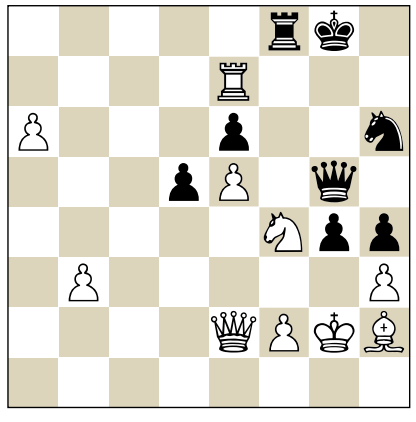
Now White has a winning position.

41...♕g5 42.♕e2 ♘h6

If 42...g3 the simplest is 43.♕g4, although 43.♘xe6 is also possible.

43.♖xe7

I cannot criticize this move, which 'by force' exchanges half of Black's remaining pieces. Especially since Black's rejoinder would not have occurred to me even in my worst dreams. In fact 43.a7! was more forceful, not deviating from the general course, and after 43...gxh3+ 44.♔xh3 ♕f5+ both the simple 45.♔g2 and the phantasmagorical 45.♔xh4 are good.



43...gxh3+

The only chance of putting up a fight was the incredible 43...♖c8!!, when gxh3++ is threatened, for example 44.♖xe6 gxh3+ 45.♔xh3 ♖c3+ 46.♗g3 ♖xg3+ 47.♔h2 ♕xf4 48.fxg3 ♕xg3+ 49.♔h1 ♕h3+ 50.♔g1 ♕xe6 51.a7 ♕b6+ 52.♕f2 ♕b7. Therefore I would have had to find 44.hxg4 (instead of 44.♖xe6) 44...♕xe7 45.f3, and after 45...♘f7 46.♗g1 to display a certain accuracy

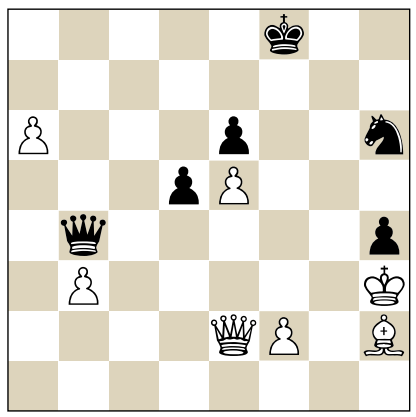
44.♔xh3 ♕xe7

44...♕f5+ 45.♔xh4 is +10 ☺.

45.♘g6 ♕b4

Or 45...♕a3 46.♘xf8 ♔xf8 47.♕e3.

46.♘xf8 ♔xf8

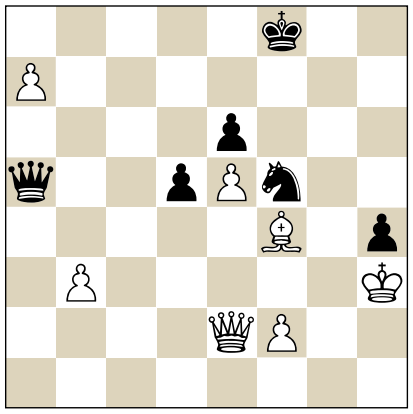


47.a7! The final nuance. Were it not for this pawn, all would not be so clear.

47...♕a5

In the event of 47...♕a3 the white queen breaks through to the pawn: 48.♕e3 ♘f5 49.♕b6.

48.♗f4! ♘f5



49.♕h5! ♔**g7** On 49...♕xa7 follows 50.♕h8+ ♔f7 51.♕h7+ ♘g7 52.♗h6 ♕xf2 53.♕xg7+ ♔e8 54.♕g4.
50.♕g5+ ♔h7 51.♕h5+ ♔g7 52.♗g5 ♕c3+ 53.♔g2 h3+ 54.♕xh3 ♕c6 55.♗f6+ ♔g6 56.♕g4+
Black resigned. The a-pawn nevertheless promotes to a queen.
This game reminded me of the wonderful times of my youth, when 'the sunshine was brighter, and the girls were prettier', the openings were not so well studied, and chess was far more interesting.

Round Four

For the central match of the round, Svidler-Kamsky, we gladly refer to the interview with the winner further on, in which it is discussed in a lot of detail. Grischuk overcame his friend Potkin with great difficulty, losing their first game as Black. And Polgar lost her first game as White against the Cuban Leinier Dominguez, but she was also able to take revenge, after which the audience in the hall (to be honest, there weren't very many) rewarded her with applause. The tiebreak also went dramatically: Polgar got ahead twice, Dominguez levelled the scores, but in the five-minute games Judit nevertheless won 1½-½. Bravo!

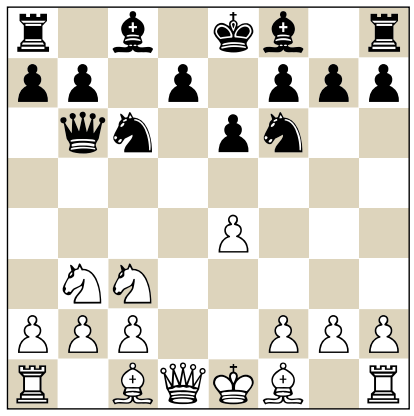
Another Cuban, Lazaro Bruzon, led in his tiebreak against Ruslan Ponomariov, but then his luck eluded him. Vasily Ivanchuk defeated Bu Xiangzhi with great difficulty. Then again, at that stage there couldn't be any more easy matches by definition.

The game that earned Judit applause was a veritable thriller.

NOTES BY
Judit Polgar

SI 32.1 – B33
Leinier Dominguez
Judit Polgar
Khanty-Mansiysk 2011 (4.2)

I got the chance to play in the 2011 World Cup in Khanty-Mansiysk due to my qualification from the European Championship in Aix-les-Bains last spring. Not only did I qualify, I also played very well and, tying for first, I took the bronze medal. My first visit to Siberia was for the World Cup in 2009, when the weather was quite memorable. On one of the nights that we went back to the hotel it was –38 Celsius!. My second visit was the Olympiad in 2010. I consider this the best organized Olympiad I have played in (so far I have played eight Olympiads in my life).
During my third visit I no longer had any problems pronouncing 'Khanty-Mansiysk' ☺. The playing conditions in the Chess Academy, which was built especially to organize chess events, was excellent. Even the bathrooms have chess motifs on the tiles ☺. And there was fantastic live coverage. In the playing hall there were five cameras following the games and the facial expressions of the players. One could really feel the tension during the games while watching the transmission live.
But let's move on to the game! I had won my previous matches against Corrales from Cuba, Movsesian and Karjakin, who was the top-seed. I won the first game, and when Sergey was unable to equalize in the second game I moved on to Round 4! Against Leinier Dominguez I lost my first game with white, which meant that I was in a must-win situation. I had not prepared much for the game, but was very much focused to try and play a long game, thinking that in the long run I might get some chances. Obviously winning with black against a very strong and stable player like Dominguez is almost impossible.
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♕b6
I have played this line previously, but it is not my main weapon.
5.♘b3 ♘f6 6.♘c3 e6
I have great memories of this line from my game against Motylev in Halkidiki 2003.



7.♗g5
Trying to play similarly to the Rauzer with ♕d2, I thought, if I would go ...♗e7 and later ...d6. In this position 7.♗d3 and 7.♗e3 are the most played moves. For some time 7.♕e2 was considered the best reply (as Motylev played against me).
7...a6
Not yet deciding where to go with my bishop, to b4 or e7.
8.♕f3
I had been expecting 8.♕d2. In Game 8 of our match, in the 5-minute playoff, White did go 8.♕d2. We were both very tired by that time and the tension was very high. I would not like to comment on the quality of this game, but I won, so I was very happy to be able to move on to the next stage of the event! This is how that game went: 8.♕d2 ♕c7 9.0-0-0 b5 10.f3 ♗e7 11.♔b1 0-0 12.g4 ♘e5 13.♗f4 b4 14.♘e2 ♖d8 15.♘ed4 ♗b7 16.♕e1 ♖ac8 17.h4 d5 18.exd5 ♖xd5 19.h5 ♘xf3 20.♕g3 e5 21.♗g2 exf4 22.♕xf3 ♖xd4 23.♘xd4 ♗xf3 24.♗xf3 ♘d7 25.♖he1 ♗f6 26.♘c6 ♘e5 27.♘xe5 ♕xc2+ 28.♔a1 ♗xe5 29.♖b1 f6 30.♗e4 ♕d2 31.♗f5 ♗xb2+ 0-1, Dominguez-Polgar, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

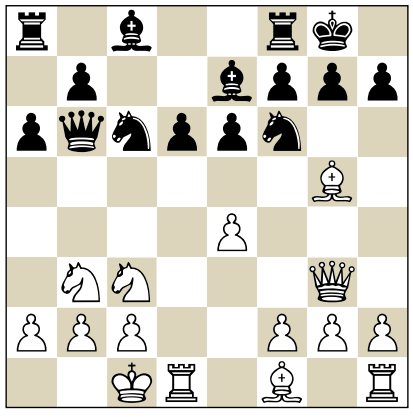
8...♗e7 9.♕g3

Of course it is not easy to play a sharp Sicilian with white if a draw is enough to qualify to the next stage of the World Cup.

9...d6 10.0-0-0

It was clear after this queen move that White aims to castle queenside. I was happy about this and was looking forward to a sharp game!

10...0-0



11.♔b1

I think 11.♗e2 was a move to consider, when ♗h6 would threaten to force my knight back to e8.

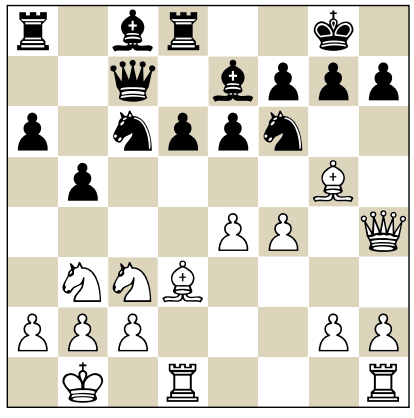
In case of 11.♗xf6 I was happy to give the pawn, because Black has great compensation after 11...♗xf6 12.♖xd6 ♕c7.

11...♖d8 12.f4 ♕c7 13.♗d3

By this time it was clear that my opponent did not choose to play solidly, but wanted to play in the spirit of the Sicilian. He had already used almost 50 minutes.

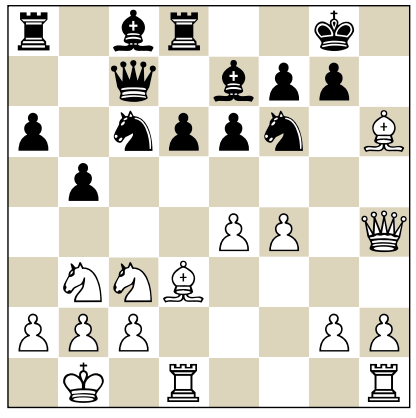
13...b5 I felt very comfortable, because I thought that I could not dream of a better game after the opening. I felt that I would have chances. In this position there are always basic questions, such as should I play a3 or allow Black to play ...b4 and ...a5 to push the pawns. Leinier decided to go into the sharp direction, which was not only very brave but also a good decision, as I did not react in the best way.

14.♕h4



After making this move White was left with 28 minutes. It shows what a great player Leinier is. Needing only a draw to move on to the next stage in the World Cup he goes for a sharp piece sacrifice! White is putting pressure on the h7 pawn and has two ideas in mind to open the diagonal of the d3 bishop, with e5 or ♘d5.

14...h6 15.♗xh6



15...gxh6?

I made this move too quickly.

15...♘xe4! should have been played: 16.♕h3 ♘xc3+ 17.bxc3 g6 (17...gxh6 allows White to force a draw: 18.♕xh6 f5 19.♕g6+), with a complicated game. White could continue 18.♕g3. White has different ideas in mind: the concrete ♗xg6, but also h4 or ♗g5, for instance: 18...♗f6 19.♗g5 ♗xg5 20.fxg5 ♘e5 21.h4 ♕xc3 22.♕f4 ♗b7 23.h5 ♘xd3 24.♖xd3 ♕e5 25.♕h4.

16.♕xh6 ♘e8

Looking for opportunities to play on... 16...♘g4 would only lead to a repetition of moves: 17.♕h3 ♘f6 18.♕h6.

17.e5

The most logical continuation. However, 17.♘d5! was the best move, leading to great complications: 17...exd5 18.exd5 f5 19.dxc6, with a large

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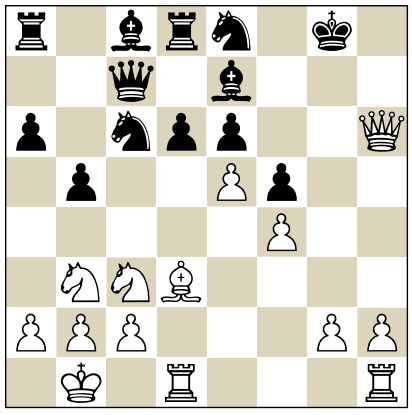
advantage for White, even if there is still a lot of work to be done to prove it. White has the initiative and great attacking chances after 19...♗f6 20.♖he1.

17...f5



18.♗xf5

Fantastic play by White! After this move Leinier had only 9 minutes left until the time-control (move 40 plus 30 seconds per move). It is also interesting in such a situation which line you start calculating, because if the first line looks good enough, you might simply have no time and motivation to look for more. In this kind of situation intuition plays an important role. I believe Leinier thought this would be at least good enough for a draw...

18.♕g6+ looks very promising, but it is not clear how White will break through: 18...♘g7 19.g4 (for example, here Black can lose the thread immediately by playing the logical 19...♗f8, when there is trouble after 20. ♗xf5 exf5 and 21.♘d5, with a decisive attack) 19...dxe5 20.gxf5 exf5 21.♖hg1 ♗f8, and in the ensuing lines somehow Black survives.

I think the most promising would be 18.exf6 ♗xf6 19.♘e4 ♕g7 20.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 21.♕h4, with good compensation for White.

18...exf5 19.♘d5

Things are getting really scary and I really have to watch my step, as after 19...♕d7 comes 20.♖d3, and it is over. 19.♕g6+ ♘g7 20.♘d5 would allow me to play 20...♕d7 21.♘f6+ ♗xf6 22.exf6 ♕f7, and Black is taking over after 23.♕g5 ♖a7.

VLADIMIR BARSKY

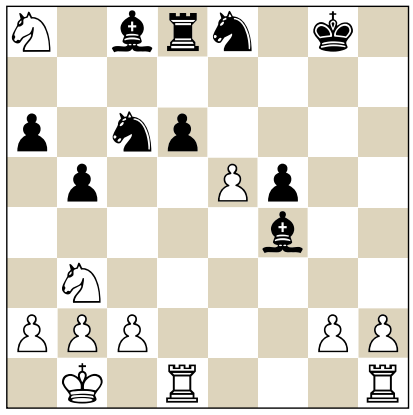
She must have gotten used to it by now, but with her enterprising play Judit Polgar was once again one of the most popular grandmasters in Khanty-Mansiysk.

19...♗f8

Forcing White to enter into an endgame with unbalanced material.

19...♕a7 allows White to make a draw with 20.♖d3 ♗f8 21.♖g3+ ♗g7 22.♘f6+ ♔f8 23.♘h7+.

20.♘xc7 ♗xh6 21.♘xa8 ♗xf4

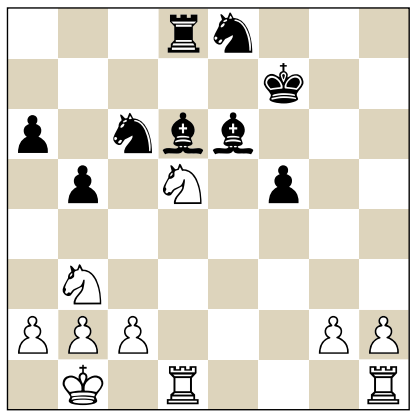


Now White has a rook and two pawns for the two bishops. This would give a clear advantage to White in normal circumstances, but the stray knight on a8 causes him problems.

22.exd6 ♗xd6 23.♘b6

White has to hurry up to get his knight into safety.

23...♗e6 24.♘d5 ♔f7



I was not sure about the exact assessment during the game, but I thought that the position was pretty balanced and that I would get some practical chances if I could activate my pieces.

25.♘e3

White is playing for safety and provokes me to push my pawn.

25.h4 was worth considering. It's always nice to have a passed pawn.

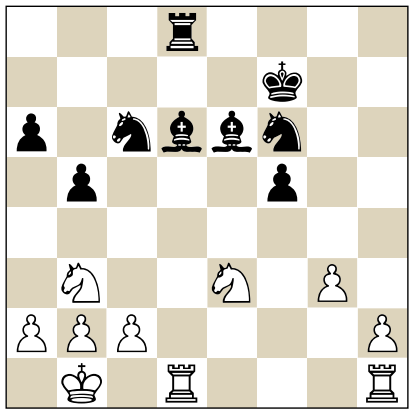
25...♘f6

I was happy to get some activity and aimed to get more space by reaching the e4-square with my knight.

26.g3

Because of the small number of black pawns there are not many chances to win, but if the battle continues, White

may get nervous and start making unnecessary mistakes.



26...♘g4

An unexpected decision. I thought that changing the pawn structure would create more options and the pawn on g4 will block the pawns on the kingside.

26...♘e4 27.♖hf1 ♔g6 28.♘d2 would give White a comfortable game.

27.♘xg4 fxg4 28.♘d4

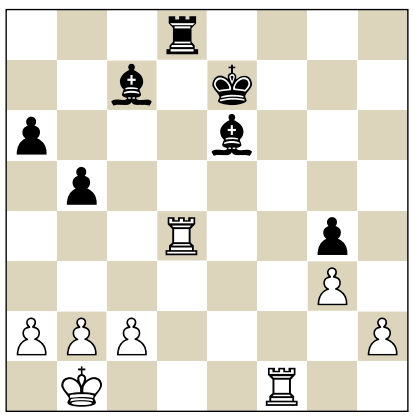
White is eager to exchange pieces.

28.♖he1 was the best move. Having the two rooks on the central files is always good! Black will not be able to get out of the pin on the d-file without exchanging rooks and then Black's winning chances would be very slim.

28...♘xd4 29.♖xd4 ♗c7

As I cannot avoid the rook exchange anyway, I offered it.

30.♖f1+ ♔e7



31.♖e4 A strange decision. After the rook swap 31.♖xd8 ♗xd8 32.c3 it would be difficult to imagine how Black could win this game.

31...♖g8

With the rooks on the board it is easier for Black to create winning chances if White makes a mistake.

VLADIMIR BARSKY

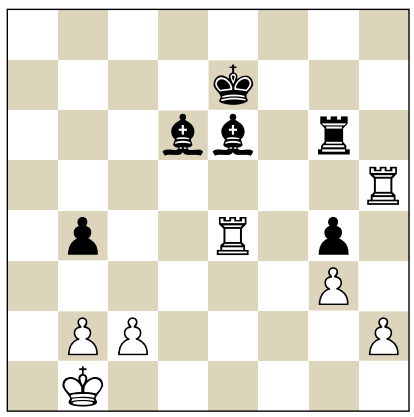
At the start of their second game Judit Polgar and Leinier Dominguez could not possibly have imagined in what adventures they would soon find themselves.

32.a4

Of course White is looking to exchange pawns, and with each exchange he gets closer to the draw.

32...♗d6 33.axb5 axb5 34.♖f5 b4 35.♖h5 ♖g6

Trying to free my king with ...♔d7-c6.



36.h3

This is the point of the rook manoeuvre to h5. I thought that it was a draw now, but of course I fought on.

36...gxh3 37.♖xh3 ♔d7 38.♖h7+

38.♖hh4 would threaten to get rid of Black's last pawn on b4 and enter into a theoretically drawn endgame. After 38...♖xg3 the simplest draw is 39.♖h7+ ♗e7 40.b3.

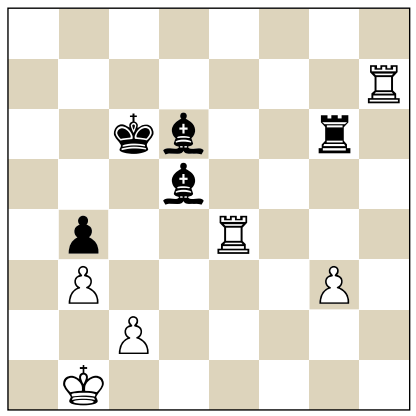
38...♔c6 39.b3

White was in heavy time-trouble for the last seven moves and under great pressure due to the match situation.

White could have forced a theoretical draw by 39.♖hh4! and grabbing the b4 pawn by sacrificing back the exchange.

39...♗d5

It is always difficult when you have many options that all look the same, as in this situation: where to move the rook? The clock is ticking and ticking and you only see that you have just seconds left...



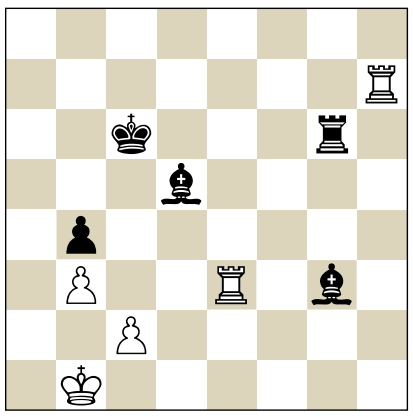
40.♖e3

40.♖eh4! is not an easy move to find

to make the time-control. It still would have saved the game, because I cannot take the g3 pawn either way, and to avoid the exchange of my last pawn I should try 40...♖e6 (after 40...♖xg3 41.♖7h6 White will next take on d6 and then take my pawn on b4 with a draw, and after 40...♗xg3 he obviously plays 41.♖xb4).

40...♗xg3

Now the time-trouble is over White has a theoretical draw within reach, but maybe my opponent underestimated my chances. White has to be quick, otherwise, if my bishop can reach the h8-a1 diagonal, he will be in big trouble.



41.♖a7

White should have realized that once I blockade the c2 pawn, Black is practically winning!

41.c3! would have led to a worse version than before, but White could still force the exchange of the pawns and transpose to a rook and bishop versus a rook and pawn ending: 41...♗f4 42.♖he7 ♗xe3 43.♖xe3.

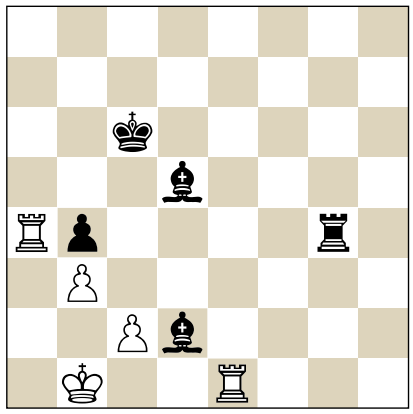
41...♖g4 42.♖a4

Of course, White is playing for c3, but while looking for the best moment to do so he misses his last chance: 42.c3! ♗f2 43.♖ae7 is only a draw after 43...♗xe3 44.♖xe3.

42...♗f4 43.♖e1

43.♖e2 would create more problems for Black.

43...♗d2



Finally I got a winning position.

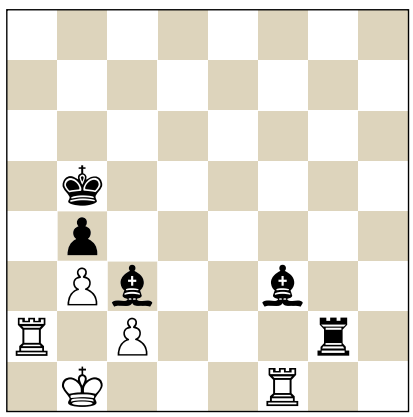
44.♖d1 ♗c3 45.♖a6+ ♔b7 46.♖a5 ♗e4

It is clear that Black's main target is the c2 pawn and the weakness of the back rank, but I will need the help of my king.

47.♖a4

White's only option is to wait and see if Black will be able to break through.

47...♖g2 48.♖a2 ♔b6 49.♖d6+ ♔b5 50.♖d1 ♗f3 51.♖f1



I was getting nervous, because I felt that the position was winning, but did not have the patience to figure it all out and think for a while. I was very excited and played pretty fast.

51...♔c5 52.♖a7 ♗e4 53.♖c1

It was time to go forward with my king to d4, but I still made some unnecessary moves before doing so.

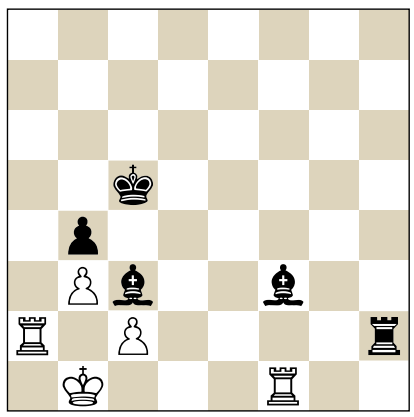
53...♔b6

White cannot leave the a-file with the rook because then I would bring my rook back to g8 and the plan would be ...♖a8 and ...♖a1 mate.

54.♖a2 ♖g3 55.♖f1 ♗g7 56.♔c1 ♖g2 57.♔b1 ♖d2 58.♔c1 ♖h2 59.♔b1 ♗c3 60.♖d1

I had practically made no progress in the last few moves, so it was about time.

60...♗f3 61.♖f1 ♔c5



In this kind of endgame the king is one of the strongest attacking pieces.

62.♖a7 ♗e4 63.♖c1 ♔d4 64.♖d7+ ♔e3 65.♖e7 ♖h6 66.♖a7 ♗d2 67.♖g1 ♔f2 68.♖d1 ♔e2 69.♖g1 ♗e3

Around here I was really excited that I was about to equalize the match!

69...♖h3 to attack the b3 pawn was also possible: 70.♔b2 ♖c3.

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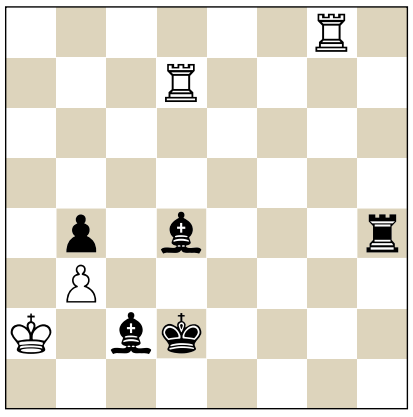
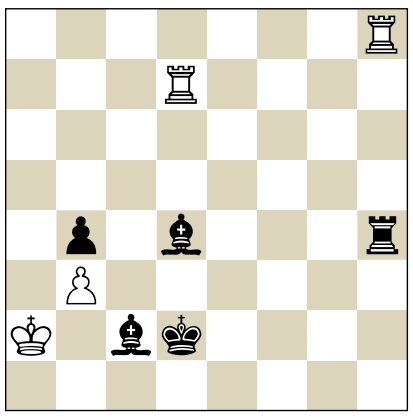
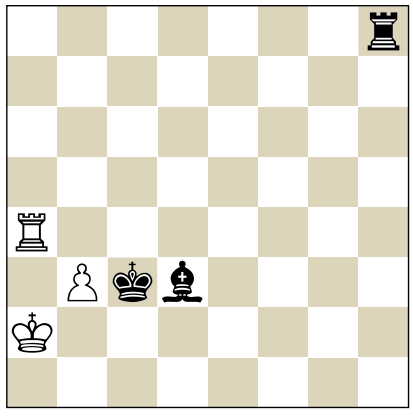
70.♖e7 White is fighting for his last chance to draw, but...
70...♖h4
Now White cannot keep his defence of the first rank, as his rook has to move.
71.♖g8 ♗d4 72.♔a2 Trying to escape from the mate on the first rank.
72...♔d2 73.♖d7 ♗xc2



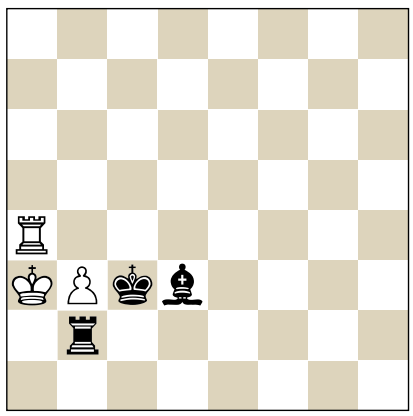
Suddenly the unexpected ... ♗b1+ is the threat and then ...♖h1+-♖a1 mate!
74.♖h8
A very good practical try, and of course I was surprised by this move.
After the game Zoli (Zoltan Almasi, her second – ed.) said that 74.♖b8 was a draw, but ☺ Black has 74...♗b1+, which unfortunately I did not see, as I was already very tired: 75.♔xb1 ♖h1+ 76.♔a2 ♖a1 mate.



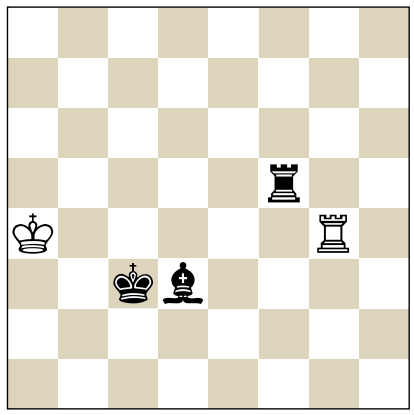
74...♖xh8
Yes, I could have finished the game by playing 74...♔c1, with a study-like mating net after 75.♖xh4 ♗b1 mate!! But I thought that I would reach the theoretical win in the rook and bishop versus rook ending. Actually, I was right, but not exactly the way I went about it...
75.♖xd4+ ♗d3 76.♖xb4
76.♔b2 ♖b8 wins.
76...♔c3
When I took the h8 rook, I was aware that I would reach the winning Philidor position, but not exactly the way I was doing it...
77.♖a4



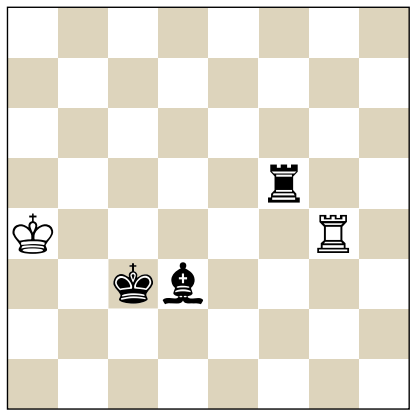
77...♖h2+
77...♖b8!! crossed my mind, but I calculated and rejected it because of the following line: 78.♖a3 ♖b4 79.♖a4. This was the reason why I did not do this (and at this point I obviously did not see the coming ♖b4 stalemate!), but after 79...♖xb3 the position is winning because of the badly placed king and rook: 80.♖a3. I thought this was a draw 😐 but 80...♗b1+ wins the rook.
78.♔a3 At this point I realized that I had misplayed it.
78...♖b2 But White only had a minute left, and it was possible he would make a mistake.



79.♖g4?
Missing a beautiful stalemate: 79.♖b4!! ♖b1 80.♔a2 ♔xb4. I like these kinds of fantastic moves, but not during this game I guess.
79...♖xb3+ 80.♔a4
I knew perfectly well that this was a winning position, but somehow I got confused a bit. I only had a few minutes left and nerves are also part of the game...
80...♖b1 81.♔a5 ♖b5+ 82.♔a4 ♖f5



83.♖g3 ♖f4+?
83...♖f1! wins on the spot: 84.♔a5 ♖f6, and game over!
84.♔a3 ♖f1 85.♖g2
Here I started to get even more nervous, as I felt that my brain wasn't working properly, precisely now that there was so much at stake!
85...♖h1
85...♖b1!, with zugzwang! This is the position I finally got after the 106th move.
86.♖b2 I had forgotten about this move 😐, and here I started to get angry at myself.
86...♖a1+ 87.♖a2 ♖b1 88.♖g2 ♖b3+ 89.♔a4 ♖b4+ 90.♔a3 ♖b6
90...♖b1, with zugzwang.
91.♖g4 ♖a6+ 92.♖a4 ♖b6 93.♖g4 ♖b7 94.♖h4 ♖b1 95.♖h2 ♖b6 95...♗f1, with zugzwang.
96.♖h4 ♗f1 I started to get the point, but still not the right way.
97.♖g4 ♖b5 98.♖g3+ ♗d3 99.♖g4 ♖b1 100.♖g2 ♖b3+ 101.♔a4 ♖b5 102.♖g4 ♖f5



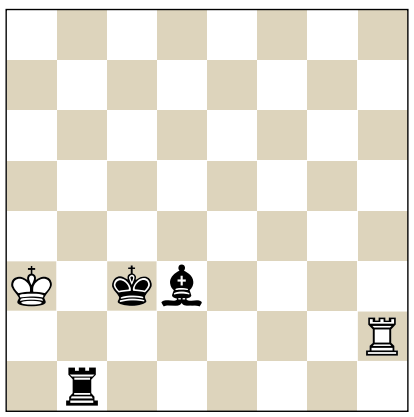
Exactly the same position as at move 82, so I really made myself and my fans very nervous...

103.♔a3 ♖f1 104.♖g2 ♖b1

Finally I got the point, but would I be in time?

105.♖h2 ♗f5 Immediately after making my move I realized I had to go to f1.

106.♖g2 ♗d3 107.♖h2



It is amazing that when I finally reached the winning position, White could have stopped the clock and ask for a draw from the arbiter because of a threefold repetition!! The strange thing is that Dominguez was checking the scoresheet carefully for the last 20 moves, but he was not sure exactly which position had really come up three times. By making his move 107. ♖h2 this was the third time that we had it on the board after moves 95 and 105... Maybe he was afraid to claim because he was not sure, as if his claim was not correct, the game would be stopped for a few minutes and I might figure things out... Well, luck is something you need both in chess and in life!

107...♗f1

Yessss.....!!!! I did it, when about everybody had given up hope that I would be able to prove the win...

108.♖f2 ♗c4 109.♖f3+ ♗d3 110.♖f2 ♖b3+ 111.♔a2

Or 111.♔a4 ♖b6, and wins.

111...♖b6 112.♔a1 ♖g6

White resigned. His last chance was 113.♖g2, but I have 113...♖e6, and it's over.

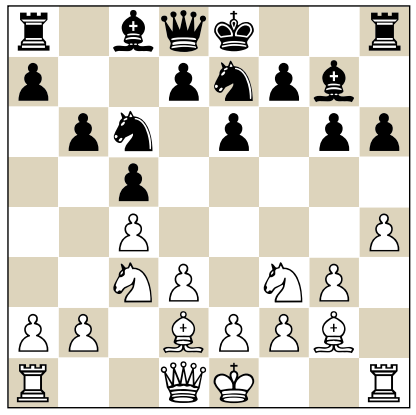
At this point I was only happy and was not thinking about the playoffs the next day. I just enjoyed this victory!

Round Five

After all the twists and turns, two representatives of the three leading chess powers got through to the quarter finals: Peter Svidler and Alexander Grischuk (Russia), Teimour Radjabov and Vugar Gashimov (Azerbaijan), Vasily Ivanchuk and Ruslan Ponomariov (Ukraine), and also two representatives from Eastern Europe – Judit Polgar (Hungary) and David Navara (Czech Republic).

Svidler and Ponomariov won passes to the semi-final in normal time by beating Polgar and Gashimov respectively. Their matches followed the same scenario, which had already been touted by Svidler: a draw as White and a win as Black. Polgar and Gashimov fought for a win too zealously, and when they realized that the well was dry and it was time to offer a draw, they got turned down.

Ivanchuk won as White against Radjabov in excellent style. But Radjabov managed a brilliant revenge!



Radjabov-Ivanchuk (5.2)
position after 8...b6

9.h5 g5 10.♘xg5!? hxg5 11.♗xg5

Later it was proved that objectively the sacrifice wasn't completely correct, but its practical effect exceeded all expectations: as soon as the 20th move Black's position became absolutely hopeless.

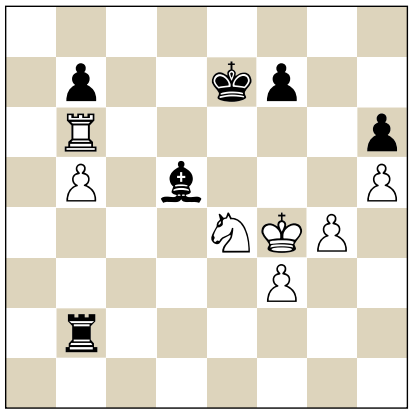
In the tie-break Ivanchuk held on, with difficulty, as Black, and as White he 'wrapped up' a slightly better ending, making the best of the advantage of the bishop pair with very good technique.

Grischuk got nothing as White against Navara, and as Black he found himself

VLADIMIR BARSKY

Children, parents and pigeons bask in the golden autumn sun, knowing full well that frosty temperatures will soon make outdoor life less attractive in Khanty-Mansiysk.

on the brink of defeat: a pawn down in a tough position.



Navara-Grischuk (5.2)
position after 48...♗d5

By Alexander's admission, at this point he was already thinking about which flight to Moscow to buy a ticket for. But David Navara got flustered and, despite having lots of time to spare, quickly played **49.♔e5?**
I think I met Navara at lunch on the first day of the quarter-finals. I told him about my recent trip to Prague, and with a smile I admitted that in one day I drank as much beer as I usually drink in a year in Moscow. David's reaction was surprising: 'And I've earned as much here in one tournament as I usually earn in a year!'
When Ilyumzhinov's knockout tournaments were just starting many players said that the big prizes put mental pressure on them and didn't let them think calmly about chess. Since then the prizes have decreased considerably and people have also got used to those amounts, but still the well-known psychological effect makes itself felt one way or another.
The simplest route to victory was 49.♘c3 ♖b4+ (49...♗c6 doesn't work because of 50.bxc6! ♖xb6 51.♘d5+) 50.♔g3, and White wins a second pawn.
49...♗c6! White's main trump card, the b5 pawn, is now lost.
50.g5 ♖xb5+ 51.♖xb5 ♗xb5 52.g6 In the case of 52.gxh6 ♔f8 53.♘f6 ♗e2 54.f4 b5! Black is also out of danger.
52...fxg6 53.hxg6 ♗d3 54.♘c5 Draw.

VLADIMIR BARSKY

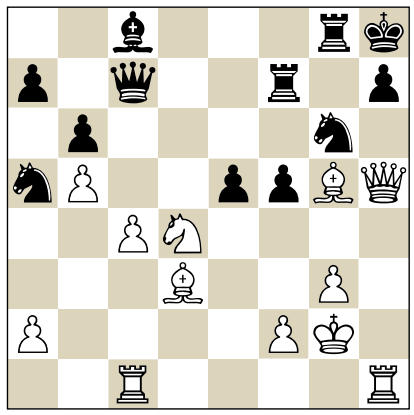
It wasn't the first time that Ukrainian stars Vasily Ivanchuk and Ruslan Ponomariov were paired against each other in a knock-out competition. This time Ivanchuk defeated his compatriot and qualified for the Candidates' tournament.

In the tie-break Grischuk won as Black and held on (although not without adventures) for a draw as White.

The Semi-Final

The semi-final matches were surprisingly reminiscent of the World Championship that took place ten years ago in Moscow, in the Kremlin Palace of Congresses. What a distant and naive time that was! Selection for the World Championship via the Internet, the first suspicions of cheating (although I don't think that exact word even existed in Russian), the first metal detectors (although no, not the first: a year before that at the Kasparov-Kramnik match they were already doing searches for metal). Nugzar Zelyakov – does anyone remember that great St. Petersburg candidate master any more? He played his first game against Morozevich with such colossal strength and lost the second one so meekly! His nerves were so worn out...

All right, that's enough nostalgia. In Khanty-Mansiysk ten years later Ponomariov and Svidler met in one semi-final, and Ivanchuk was up against Grischuk in the other (in Moscow Anand was Vasily's opponent). So we got a Russia-Ukraine mini-match on two boards.



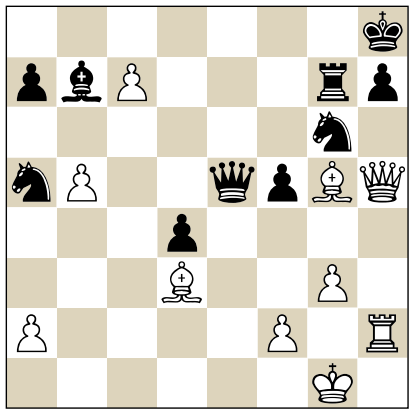
Grischuk-Ivanchuk (6.5)
position after 27...♗c8

This was the first 10-minute game. Both of the classical games had ended in a draw, and in the 25-minute games the grandmasters had traded blows.
28.c5
I had difficulty putting any kind of punctuation mark after this move. Grischuk joked afterwards that he played the combination in Polgar's style: the piece sacrifice was incor-

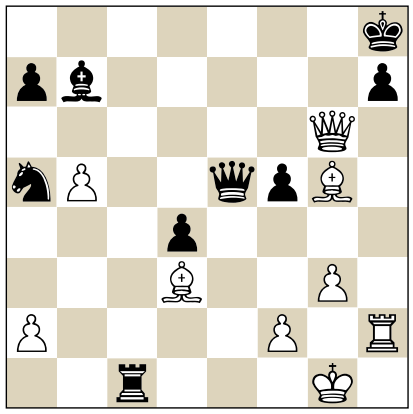
rect and everything on the board was hanging, but a few moves later his opponent's position became hopeless. Of course, Alexander wasn't referring to all of Judit's games, he was talking about one of her wins against Dominguez, which she achieved in a similar manner.

Khanty-Mansiysk 2011	
7 rounds of knock-oout	
Round 3	
Polgar-Karjakin	1½-½
Ivanchuk-Sutovsky	3-1
Zherebukh-Mamedyarov	2½-1½
Ponomariov-Efimenko	2½-1½
Tomashevsky-Gashimov	½-1½
Grischuk-Morozevich	1½-½
Bacrot-Radjabov	½-1½
Kamsky-Nepomniachtchi	3-1
Caruana-Svidler	1-3
Yakovenko-Jobava	2-0
Potkin-Vitiugov	2½-1½
Parligras-Nielsen	1-3
Le Quang Liem-Bruzon	1½-2½
Navara-Moiseenko	4-2
Gupta-Bu Xiangzhi	½-1½
Dominguez-Lysyj	5-4
Round 4	
Polgar-Dominguez	4½-3½
Bu Xiangzhi-Ivanchuk	1-3
Zherebukh-Navara	0-2
Bruzon-Ponomariov	3½-4½
Gashimov-Nielsen	4-2
Potkin-Grischuk	1½-2½
Radjabov-Yakovenko	1½-½
Svidler-Kamsky	2-0
Round 5 Quarter Finals	
Svidler-Polgar	1½-½
Ivanchuk-Radjabov	2½-1½
Grischuk-Navara	2½-1½
Ponomariov-Gashimov	1½-½
Round 6 Semi-Finals	
Svidler-Ponomariov	1½-½
Grischuk-Ivanchuk	3½-2½
Final 3rd/4th place	
Ivanchuk-Ponomariov	2½-½
Final 1st/2nd Place	
Grischuk-Svidler	1½-2½

28...exd4 29.cxb6 ♗b7+
From the computer's point of view Black is winning everywhere and every way, so there isn't even any point in giving variations.
30.♔g1 ♕e5 31.♖c7 ♖xc7 32. bxc7 ♖g7 33.♖h2



33...♖xc7??
A blackout, there's no other way of describing it. The simplest path to a win was 33...f4, and White neither has a piece nor an attack.
34.♕xg6 ♖c1+

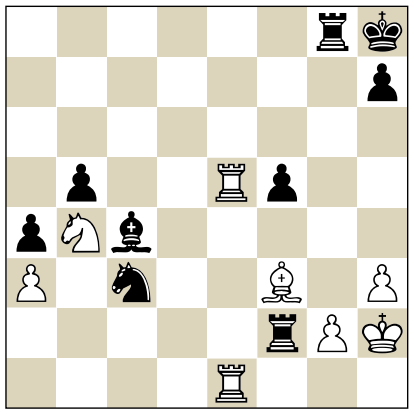


35.♗xc1
Black resigned.
I watched this game 'live', sitting next to Svidler on the podium (he came to support his friend Sanya Grischuk), and I modestly inquired, 'Well, OK, Ivanchuk missed that the c1-square was being hit. But what did he plan on doing on the simple bishop retreat 35. ♗f1, as the pieces are equal now and mate on h7 is hanging?' Svidler immediately explained: 35...♖xf1+ 36.♔xf1 ♕xb5+ 37.♔e1 ♕b1+ 38.♔e2 ♗f3+! 39.♔xf3 ♕e4 mate. A colourful mate, there's no question about it!

In the last game Grischuk confidently got a draw (after all, Ivanchuk isn't made of iron, he couldn't recover that quickly after such a shock), and made it to the final.

The Final

Peter Svidler tells the story about the fight for first place against Alexander Grischuk in the ensuing interview. In the match for the coveted third ticket to the Candidates' matches Ruslan Ponomariov seemed to have run out of steam. He couldn't make the best of his big advantage in the third or the fourth game, although finishing-off technique was and remains Ruslan's forte. Here's how the only decisive game concluded.



Ponomariov-Ivanchuk
position after 36.♖e5

36...♗e2! 37.♖xf5?
This move loses very artlessly. Ruslan still had a few minutes left on his clock, but he made the move almost instantly – he'd probably already come to terms with his loss. Although after 37.♖1xe2 ♘xe2 38.♘d3 (weaker is 38.♖xe2 ♖gxg2+ 39.♗xg2 ♖xe2) 38...♖xf3 39. gxf3 ♘d4 40.♘e1 White could still put up some tough resistance.
37...♗xf3 38.♖xf3 ♖gxg2+ 39.♔h1 ♖h2+ 40.♔g1 ♘e2+
White resigned.

Ivanchuk, on the other hand, displayed tenacity and calmness. It's even surprising that this wonderful player hasn't taken part in the battle for the World Championship for almost ten years. And now finally he's got himself a trip to the Candidates' tournament, along with Peter Svidler and Alexander Grischuk. Alas, Ruslan Ponomariov was left as the extra fourth...

Peter Svidler and Alexander Grischuk, friends and opponents, at the final press conference. 'When Sanya won the semi-final we had dinner together for the last time before the end of the tournament and decided: a) thank God, we don't have to fight for third place or a place in the Candidates' tournament, and b) the tournament is already a success, so we'll play calmly and see who gets what.'

VLADIMIR BARSKY

Peter Svidler: 'I don't want to foolishly squander the Nth chance that I've been given'

The winner of the 2011 World Cup doesn't like generalizations: 'I'm sure that as soon as I say out loud that my second spring has finally come (or third? or what are we up to now?), it will end precisely at that moment.' But it's difficult to argue with the fact that some kind of 'climate change' in the biography of the 35-year-old grandmaster from St. Petersburg is definitely taking place – only one month after winning an exceptionally strong Russian Championship in brilliant style, he achieved the biggest sporting success of his career.

Vladimir Barsky

Svidler won the three-week marathon in Khanty-Mansiysk with plenty of room to spare: five of his seven matches ended in normal time, and he didn't lose a single one of his 22 games in them. A tiebreak wasn't required in the final either, so on the last day Peter has time for an in-depth conversation. We meet at the Vanilla Sky café in a shopping mall in the centre of town, from which a wonderful panoramic view of the Ugra capital stretches out before us.

'I hardly prepared at all for the World Cup. I thought that by my standards I don't have any serious opening problems at the moment, and I've had to play an enormous amount recently, so I decided to try and preserve some kind of appetite for the game and freshness of perception. In my opinion that's far more important than try-

ing to patch up any real or imagined holes in the opening in a short period. Overall, the strategy I chose turned out to be correct. My first opponent was the Brazilian Darcy Lima. Luckily I spend a lot of time with Sanya (Alexander Grischuk – V.B.), and Sanya is the world's leading expert on him. He's played two World Cup matches with Lima. And Sanya warned me: remember, this isn't a standard first-round opponent! But nevertheless, our first game stunned me. Even forewarned and forearmed, still after the first game I was in some kind of 'shock'; and if I hadn't been warned in advance, I wouldn't have known what to think at all! Lima is playing about ten chess games a year. A man with a rating of 2480, who only plays in the Portuguese Team Championship (just so as not to forget how it's done), he fought hard for a win as White against me, and I think that at a certain point he could have won. In time-trouble it became clear that he isn't an active player, and he's not that young any more; he started making mistakes. After that scare at the start I won the second game as White in a serious battle, not without difficulty. 'A curious start!', I thought about myself. 'If winning in the first round takes so much energy from me, what's going to happen next?'

The second and third ones also proved tricky?

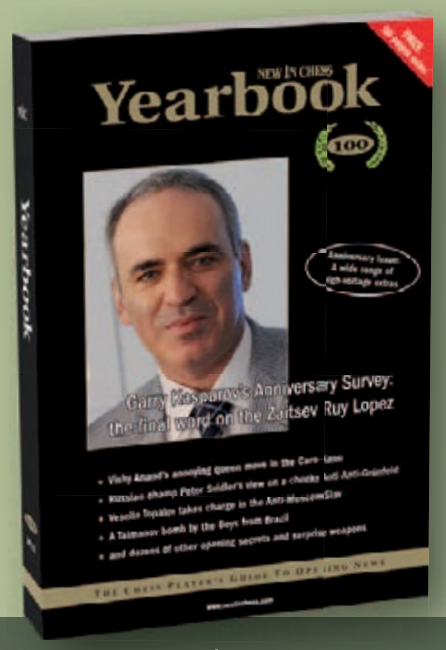
'They were both very difficult. First Nguyen, then Caruana for some reason decided to test me in the symmetrical structures of the Exchange Grünfeld, and time after time I scraped through to equalize. In the best case the positions that arise should be completely harmless, but nevertheless I didn't get out of the opening without problems against either Nguyen or Caruana.

'With Fabiano I made a draw as Black with determined efforts, and basically "didn't give an inch" as White, after which play switched to the rapid format, in which I won 2-0, getting two very difficult positions there. I don't think they were hopeless, but both the one and the other were very unpleasant. I won them both, which didn't quite correspond with the internal content of those games, of course. But those wins gave me confidence. I haven't always got it together historically against Caruana. And, as is typical, we both know that. This isn't a case where it was a subjective feeling of mine, which my opponent might not even suspect. From conversations with him and with some other people I know that Fabiano is aware of it. So there was a specific internal dynamic: on the outside it wouldn't have seemed that he was the favourite in our match, but I suspect he had reason to think that he could have been far less lucky with his third-round opponent. I think Caruana was thinking, it's good that I got this particular person!

'When I beat him, I thought, "Good! An important sign: perhaps all these 'foul-ups' won't affect me this time as much as they usually do."'

'In my match against the Vietnamese boy I also made a draw as Black. He's a unique player. The Vietnamese are all very unusual, inscrutable, they have their own vision of chess. My German colleague Jan Gustafsson, who has played him and spent some time with him, says that Nguyen was brought up specifically on Chinese chess, and people who switch to our chess from Chinese chess see tactics very well and generally have a different attitude towards our game. I don't play Chinese chess, but as far as I know, that game is insanely tactical, as literally from the first moves tough calculating "slashes" begin. If Nguyen grew up on that, then understandably it influences his vision of chess.

'Playing White I thought that I had an excellent position, that I had an enormous advantage. And up until the 20th move I was very happy that I'd found a forced way to equalize, and offered a draw. As Black I saved myself



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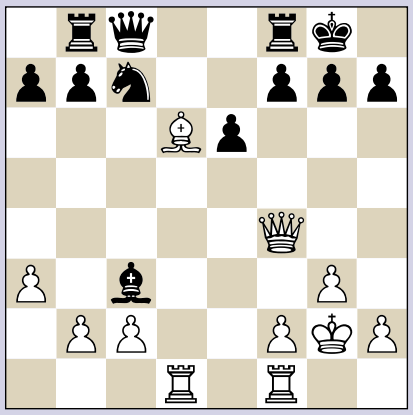
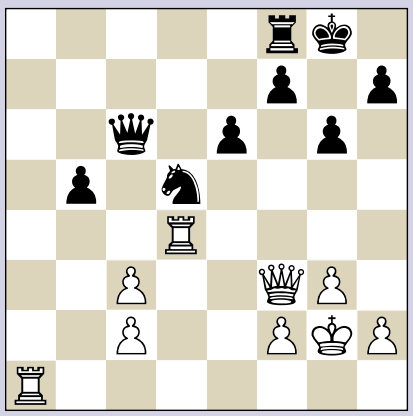
with some difficulty. And the tiebreak was extremely nerve-wracking. I made some kind of draw as Black, after getting a difficult position from the opening, and as White I very nearly lost. At home afterwards I was shocked to find that the computer asked: "Why didn't you eat the rook in one move?"



Svidler-Nguyen Ngoc Truongson (2.4)
position after 20...♗xc3

'21.♗xf8 ♔xf8 (21...♘d5? 22.♖xd5 exd5 23.♗d6) 22.bxc3 ♘d5 23.♕d6+ ♔g8 24.c4, and Black doesn't succeed in establishing a knight on d5.

'I didn't find a reply to the computer. Without eating the rook I got a position in which I was the exchange up, but it was very difficult to take advantage of it, and I came close to losing: **21.bxc3 ♘d5 22.♕f3 ♕c6 23.♗xf8 ♖xf8 24.♖d4 b5 25.a4 a6 26.axb5 axb5 27.♖a1 g6**



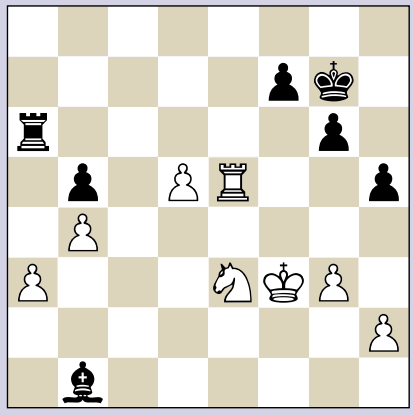
'I really didn't want to get sucked into a "rambling" game, so at a certain point I sharpened the situation, and sharpened it to such a level that a draw would already have been a lucky break.

'But in the 10-minute games I was finally able to pull myself together somehow. I never get tired of mentioning this, because it's a very important element in my successes lately: once again Alexander Igorevich Grischuk's favourable influence on my life made itself felt. By this point he had already finished his tiebreak, easily beating Feller 2-0, and he was sitting on the podium. After finishing my second game I went up to him in shock, held up my hands and said, "What the hell!" And he asked, "Why don't you go e4-e5 on the third move in reply to the French?" And I thought, "Really, why don't I go e4-e5 on the third move?" I went 3.e5 and won the game very one-sidedly. Of course, my opponent didn't play well, but I think Sanya was happy with my treatment of that variation. After that I then held out as Black quite confidently, as in a situation in which he had to win to order, Nguyen wasn't as self-confident any more.'

And so, we've come to the fourth round, in which a very interesting encounter with Gata Rustamovich awaited you.

'It's obvious that Kamsky is one of the most inconvenient opponents for me. If you don't take into account my "clinical" histories with Kramnik and Anand, against whom I simply can't play at all, then of the people against whom I can play a little, he's one of the most inconvenient opponents – in his manner, his style. He goes for a lengthy, sticky game, which has never been my strong suit. And, to my shock, I won my first game against him precisely in that way! I got a "fluctuating" Spanish without any advantage whatsoever, and outmanoeuvred him a little, but, to be honest, I don't know why he suddenly started playing very sharply. In a quiet position, in which he had a multitude of possible plans, and, to all appearances, not a single serious problem, he suddenly threw himself into some kind of "surge" and got a rather unpleasant endgame. Gata made an attempt to solve his problems by a tactical route and lost a pawn.

'But, as often happens, with the loss of a pawn the pieces that had been occupied in the defence of all the weaknesses became free. After the time control I carefully studied the position and realized that objectively it should turn out to be a draw, because it wasn't clear what I could do there. Moreover, the first few moves he made were very strong. I take a look: well, I don't have a plan! It seemed that I'd done everything I could, but I wasn't able to improve my position any more. This discovery was absolutely no tragedy for me, and for myself I decided: naturally, I won't offer a draw, I'll continue to move, but I understand that objectively there's a draw here. All my pieces are positioned ideally, but they aren't going any further. And suddenly he goes ♗b1-a2? I play ♔e4-♔d4-♔c5, and my d-pawn simply promotes to a queen.



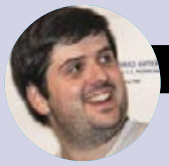
Svidler-Kamsky (4.1)
position after 46.♔f3

46...♗a2? 47.♔e4 ♖xa3 48.♔d4 ♖b3 49.d6 f6 50.♖e7+ ♔f8 51.♘d5 ♗b1 52.♔c5 ♖d3 53.♖a7 Black resigned.

'For a player of Kamsky's class this is absolutely unbelievable! Evidently he was also tired, he wasn't as fresh as he could have been, and that affected his play. But this story inspired me, as I'm used to Gata being the one who beats me in these kinds of games, not me beating him.

'As for the other duel... It probably wouldn't be right to call it "the game of my life", but it definitely did deserve the title "diagram of the tournament"!'

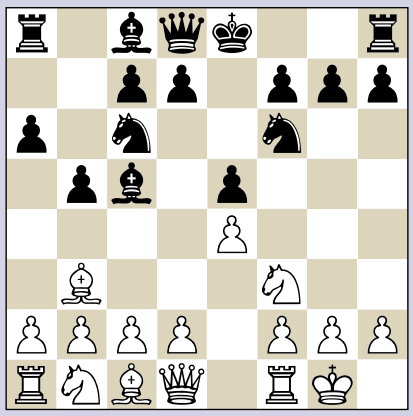
Khanty-Mansiysk



NOTES BY
Peter Svidler

RL 12.6 – C78
Gata Kamsky
Peter Svidler
Khanty-Mansiysk 2011 (4.2)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 b5 6.♗b3 ♗c5

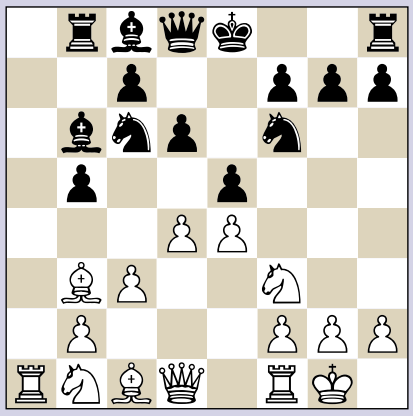


Not one of my regular opening choices, but I thought this line was a decent surprise pick in a must-draw game (after he had won the first game – ed.).

7.a4 ♖b8 8.axb5 axb5 9.c3

Gata won a nice game against Rustam Kasimdzhanov earlier in the event with 9.♘xe5, a line I had some thoughts on even before their game.

9...d6 10.d4 ♗b6



11.♗e3

I expected him to vary his approach to avoid my probable improvements, but this line had slipped under my radar somewhat.

11...0-0

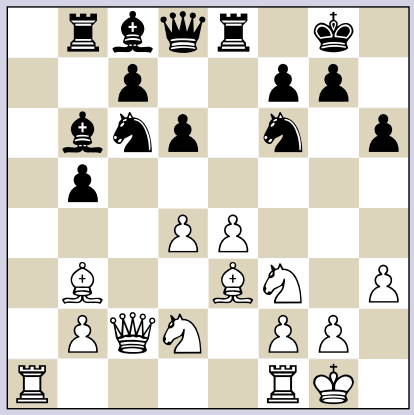
Black can play 11...♗g4 here, but after 12.♘bd2 0-0 (12...exd4 13.cxd4 ♘xd4 14.♗xd4 ♗xd4 15.♗xf7+!) 13.h3 ♗h5 14.♕c2 the position remains unclear, and I generally dislike putting my bishop on h5 in Spanish-type positions – after all, so many good things can happen when you own the long diagonals...

12.♘bd2 h6 13.h3 ♖e8 14.♕c2

This subtlety forces Black to make a decision in the centre – this move limits Black's choices compared to the natural-looking 14.♖e1.

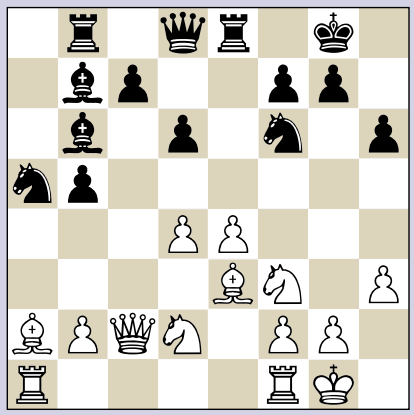
14...exd4 Because after 14...♗b7 15.d5! ♗xe3 16.dxc6 ♗xd2 17.cxb7 there is nothing to take on e1, and the bishop gets lost. However, the somewhat exposed position of the queen on c2 has its drawbacks too.

15.cxd4



15...♘a5? The correct idea in totally wrong packaging. After the cool 15...♗b7 Black is just fine.

16.♗a2 ♗b7



17.e5

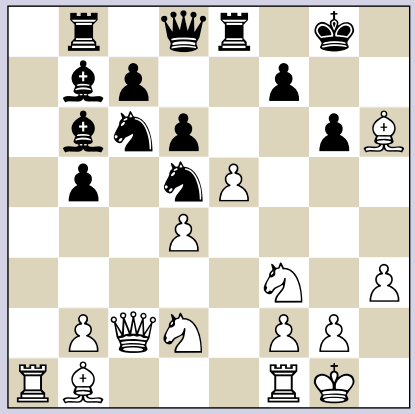
After Gata blitzed this out, I immediately realized what was happening, and wasn't exactly overjoyed. In the three minutes I allowed myself to think, I also saw that the position was not yet totally lost – and decided I had to play fast, keeping at least some pretence of being in control (judging by the number of people who asked me later if I had prepared the entire game at home, this worked wonderfully well on the spectators, but I am sure Gata was not fooled for an instant).

For some reason I'd only been concerned with the lines starting with 17.d5 ♗xe3 18.fxe3 c6, which is even more bizarre if you consider that barely a week before this game, in my match versus Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son, I based my entire opening concept on the power of the ♗b1-♕c2 battery.

17...♘d5 Otherwise Black can just resign – 17...♘d7 18.♗xh6.

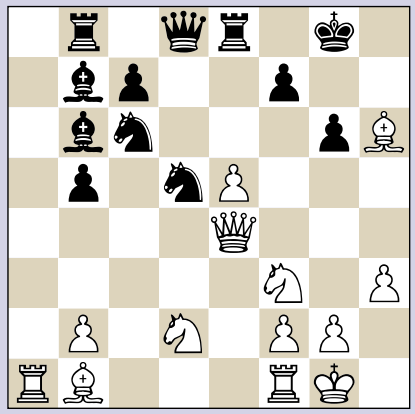
18.♗b1 g6 19.♗xh6 ♘c6

Gata started thinking here, which gave me the opportunity to take stock and calculate some lines myself.



20.exd6

I was mostly – and correctly – afraid of 20.♕e4!, and indeed Black is worse here: 20...dxe5 (perhaps Gata rejected 20.♕e4 because of 20...♘xd4!? 21.♘xd4 ♖xe5, but this spectacular shot does not quite work: 22.♕g4 ♖h5 23.♗xg6 ♖xh6 24.♗e4+ ♔f8 25.♘f5 ♖g6, and now after the precise 26.♕f3! Black is in trouble) 21.dxe5



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

21...♘d4! (21...♘f6 was my idea during the game – it's a good thing that Gata did not play 20.♕e4 is all I can say about it: 22.♕h4 ♘xe5 23.♗g5 – this rather obvious move escaped my attention. Black is totally lost here), and once he has established that 22.♘xd4 ♘b4 is not quite clear, White has a pleasant choice between 22.♕g4 ♗c8 23.♕g5 ♕xg5 24.♗xg5 ♗b7 25.♖e1, and White has a healthy extra pawn, only partially compensated for by Black's relative activity, and 22.♗g5 ♘f4! 23.♕xb7 ♘xf3+ 24.♘xf3 ♕xg5 25.♘xg5 ♖xb7, although here the machine seems to be holding on by its silicon fingernails: 26.♗a2 ♔g7! 27.g3 (27.♘xf7 ♖a7) 27...♘h5 28.♗d5 ♖a7.

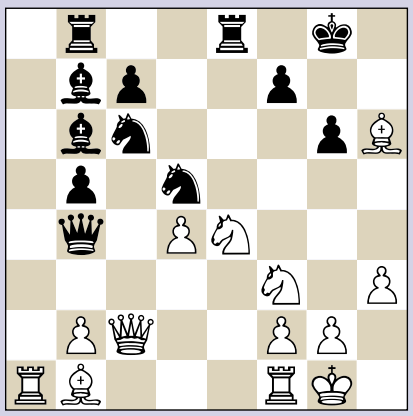
20...♕xd6

Amazingly, Black is now totally fine.

21.♘e4 21.♘b3 ♘f4 is clearly wrong.

21...♕b4

Here Gata paused again.



22.♗a2

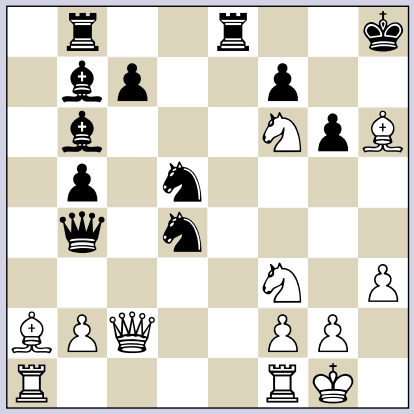
A very strong resource. At first glance, it looks like a winning blow – but things are about to get very messy.

Perhaps his initial idea had been to play 22.♗d2, and then he realized that after 22...♘xd4! 23.♗xb4 ♘xc2 24.♗xc2 ♘xb4 25.♘f6+ ♔h8 26.♘xe8 ♘xc2 27.♖ac1 ♗xf3! he can't keep the extra exchange: 28.♖xc2 (28.gxf3 ♘d4) 28...♗e4 29.♖xc7 ♖xe8 30.♖xf7 ♔g8 31.♖d7 ♖f8, and Black is at least not worse.

22.♘eg5, with the idea of ♘xf7, is met solidly by 22...♕c4! 23.♕d1 ♕e2.

22...♘xd4 Allowing White's next – but there is no choice, so this decision came very easily.

23.♘f6+ ♔h8



24.♘xd4

Objectively, 24.♘xd5 was better here. Now Black has a choice:

A) 24...♘xf3+! 25.♔h1 (25.gxf3 ♗xd5 26.♗xd5 ♕h4 is fine for Black – White can't keep his extra piece if he wants to avoid the perpetual 27.♕c3+ ♗d4 28.♕xc7 ♕xh6) 25...♕h4, and the machine suggests that Black is doing very well, one nice sample line being 26.♕c3+ ♘d4 27.♘xb6 b4! 28.♕d3 cxb6 29.♗xf7 ♘f5 30.♗xe8 ♖d8!;

B) The endgame arising after 24...♗xd5 25.♘xd4 ♗xa2 26.♘c6 ♕c4 27.♕xc4 ♗xc4 28.♘xb8 ♗xf1 29.♘d7 may well be tenable, but I would really hate to have to defend it against Gata.

However, the text-move looks much stronger, and White chose it without much hesitation.

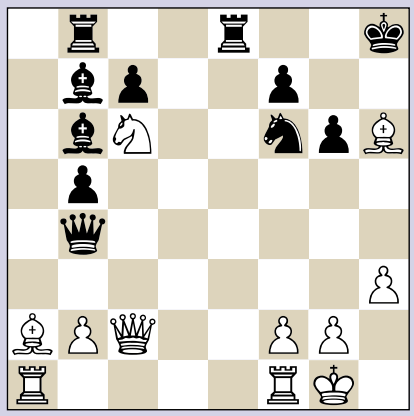
24...♘xf6

VLADIMIR BARSKY

On their way to the diagram of the tournament. 'It's obvious that Kamsky is one of the most inconvenient opponents for me. He goes for a lengthy, sticky game, which has never been my strong suit.'

Somewhere around here the play took on a slightly surreal quality for me. Every now and then I manage to achieve the feeling of being (one with the universe – and Donovan) totally immersed in the position, and seeing everything very clearly – something that in other sports is often referred to as 'in the zone' – and it happened here. I felt I knew what the right moves were, often before I could figure out why.

25.♘c6



25...♕h4

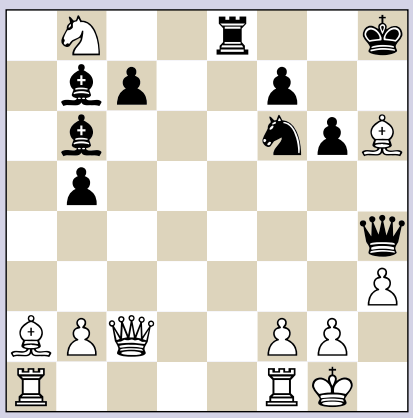
By this point I had worked out that the pedestrian 25...♗xc6 26.♕xc6 ♕h4 is wrong in view of 27.♗e3! – an incredibly strong move which instantly stops all counterplay, and all that remains of Black's position are the numerous weaknesses.

However, I still did not quite see how

to justify 25...♕h4 – I just knew it had to be played. However, in the 15 or so minutes that Gata needed for his decision, I saw the whole picture – and then, agonizingly, had to wait for his move.

26.♘xb8

26.♗e3 is no longer an option: 26...♖xe3! 27.fxe3 ♖e8, and Black is totally winning. The machine suggests White's best choice is 26.♗c1, which is a good indication of just how much the tables have turned here.



26...♖e2!

My first idea was to play 26...♗e4, creating the threat of ...♕g3 – but it fails to 27.♕d2 ♘g4 (27...♕g3 28.♕g5) 28.hxg4 ♕g3 29.♕c3+. Then I decided to re-check whether I had any options after the immediate 26...♕g3 27.♘c6, and, lo and behold, I spotted 27...♖e2! – which satisfied me for a moment, since after the best, 28.♕c3 ♗xf2+ 29.♔h1 ♕xc3 30.bxc3 ♗xc6, Black will be able to make the draw required by the match situation.

But then came the final light-bulb moment. Why am I starting with ...♕g3? I asked myself. Once you spot 26...♖e2, the actual re-checking of lines takes very little time – but then I had to wait, and wait, and wait, interminably as it seemed then – and hope that Gata would take on b8, because although by that point I knew I was no longer in any real danger of losing the game, I wanted very badly to make a move like that on the board. My run towards the board when I saw him reach for the knight must have been a peculiar sight.

'For a long time Polgar hasn't been just a strong improvement on Fritz who only sees the king and nothing else. But nevertheless, out of everything she can do in chess, attacking is what she's best at.'

27.♕c3

There is nothing better.

27...♖xf2 28.♘c6 ♖xf1+

28...♗xc6 would have been more precise and mates sooner, but taking two rooks with checks is rarely a mistake. White resigned.

■ ■ ■

And so, then came the wonderful Judit.

'Yes. Only those who are too lazy haven't written about the score I had against her until not long ago. It seems that at San Luis in 2005 I won the first game against her in my life. But since then I've won a few more, so the dynamic has changed a little. I was chuckling about this with my wife Olga, because it was around that time that Khalifman arrived in Khanty-Mansiysk and gave his famous interview. When he was asked what he thought about the phenomenon of Judit and her play against men, he said, "If we don't give in to pathetic political correctness then we can say it straight: Judit has always been able to play well against men who have problems in their personal life, in their relations with the female sex, and so on. Veniaminovich [Peter Svidler] used to have them; lately they've disappeared, and his score has become decent." My wife and I were very happy about those words!

'Once again, I've played badly against her for so long and so regularly that there hasn't been anything new or exotic in my play against this particular woman for a very long time. I know that it will be difficult for me and that I can be mated at any moment. The most important thing for me is that, and not whether she's a man or a woman. I'm getting mated; what does it matter who's sitting opposite me, if they're mating me! That's what really bothers me, and all the rest – not so much. The match went in the usual way: as White I got a meaningless, colourless draw in 15 moves. What's more, I'd made an effort to prepare, and that was the result.

'But as Black... On the evening after the first game I was talking to Gustafsson on Skype, and I said to him, "I don't know what to play tomorrow, but there's an idea that I should come out with something combative, because we want a big game!" And I put that idea into practice. I chose my first move about 10 minutes before the start of the game, and the sixth – already at the board. We were both very happy that we had an extremely sharp Sicilian position. In fact, as the years have gone by Judit has become a very decent technical player, she has beaten Anand in quiet positional games and Karjakin in the Berlin. For a long time Polgar hasn't been just a strong improvement on Fritz who only sees the king and nothing else. But nevertheless, out of everything

she can do in chess, attacking is what she's best at.

'I think I gave her exactly what she wanted to get, but the position was still very unclear, and I'm not too bad at playing those kinds of positions myself. At a certain point she overestimated her chances. She had full compensation for the pawn, but I managed to defend, and she should have made a forced draw when she had that opportunity. But when she didn't do that, in time trouble she gradually put her pieces on the kinds of squares that I suddenly realized: I have good free play for a win. I turned down the draw, and by the 40th move I already had a completely winning position.'

Then came Ruslan Ponomariov.

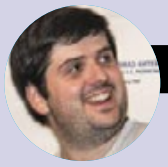
'Also a person with whom it isn't all that easy. I lost to him in the semi-final of the World Championship in 2001. Back then he was playing just brilliantly! I remember all too well the feeling that I was being run over by a tank.'

Still, that was a long time ago...

'Yes. Since then he's won more games against me than I've won against him.

'And so, in the semi-final I was up against the latest person with whom I had a long history of interacting. The match followed the standard scenario. I got a nice position as White, it seemed to me, and for once I was happy with the results of the opening, but just a move later I thought for 25 minutes in search of a forced draw and apparently found one. I still hadn't checked it: either I'd evaluated the position incorrectly in the first place, or the move ♕d1-f3 was horrible (almost certainly that was the case). But the game in which I'd placed definite hopes – I certainly didn't come out intending to make a draw as White – ended instantly, and not at all in the way I wanted it to.

'The second game was also very interesting, a good game, not without "spirit".'



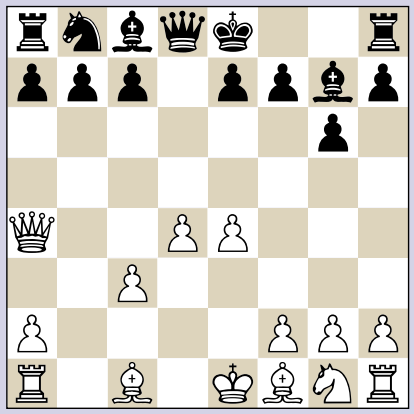
NOTES BY
Peter Svidler

GI 4.1 – D85
Ruslan Ponomariov
Peter Svidler
Khanty-Mansiysk 2011 (6.2)

By this point I was almost glad to be playing the potentially decisive game with black, having won my previous two.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♕a4+

Somewhat unexpected, but, unfortunately for me, I managed to remember what my notes said.



7...♗d7?!

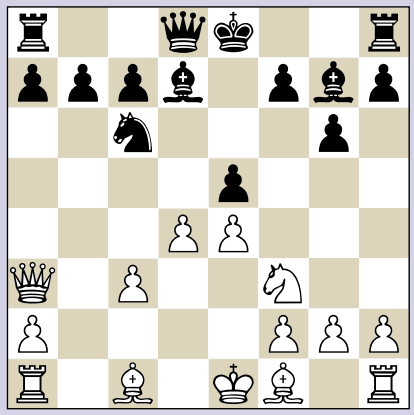
It is much more natural to play 7...♘d7 (or even 7...♕d7 for that matter), and of course I realized after thinking about this soberly for about 30 seconds that Ruslan would never play 8.♕b3. But my notes on the subject were so full of excitement and vigour... Even though there is a three per cent chance he might, I told myself, I must not let this wonderful opportunity slip.

8.♕a3 3%? Bah!

8...♘c6

Back-up plan – even in my somewhat addled state of mind, I would not have played 7...♗d7 if I did not have some sort of an idea on how to meet 8.♕a3. Sane people over the years have preferred 8...b6 9.♘f3 c5, but as is the norm in Grünfelds where Black plays ...b6 too early, White will be slightly better if he manages to hold his centre intact for long enough to complete development, especially if his bishop lands on a6 (this theme will re-appear later). Also, the play is fairly non-imaginative, and White does not have to do much to have a pleasant and risk-free edge, something I was very keen to avoid.

9.♘f3 e5



10.♗e3

A slightly over-conservative choice, but certainly not a bad one.

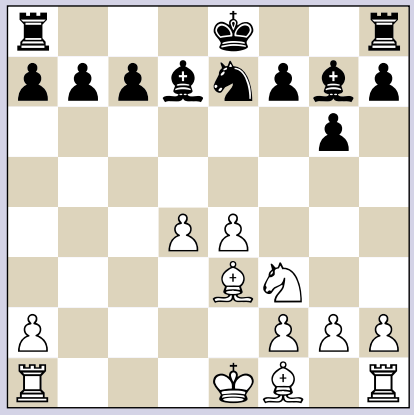
I had expected 10.d5 ♘e7, and now after the simple 11.c4 (11.♗g5 h6 12.♗h4 g5 13.♗g3 ♘g6 is quite unclear, and was one of the few salient points of 8...♘c6) 11...0-0 12.♗d3 b6 13.♗b2 f6 14.c5! (if Black is allowed to play c7-c5, he will be fine) White is clearly better.

After 10.♗g5 f6 11.♗e3 ♕e7 12.♕xe7+ Black has the additional option of 12...♘xe7

10...exd4 11.cxd4 ♕e7

11...♗g4 12.♗b5 did not really appeal to me.

12.♕xe7+ ♘xe7



13.♖b1?!

A serious inaccuracy, but an understandable one – firstly, inducing ...b6 to acquire the a6-square for the bishop is

very natural and normally very good, and, more importantly, it is not every day that you have to worry about Black castling queenside in the Grünfeld!
After 13.♖c1 c6 (13...0-0-0 14.♗f4! c6 15.♗c4 is a huge improvement on the game, and cannot be recommended for Black) 14.♗c4 ♖d8 15.0-0 ♗g4 16.♘e5 ♗e6 17.♗xe6 fxe6 18.f4 ♘c8 Black is hanging on, but it is very far from pleasant.

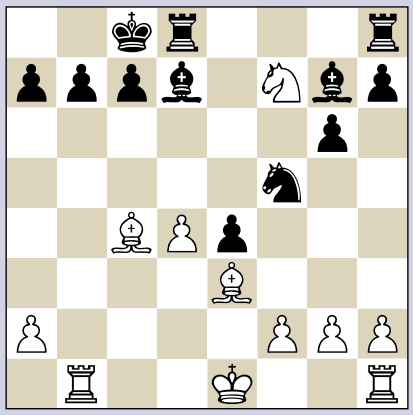
13...0-0-0! Now the play becomes very sharp – White's centre is under some serious pressure.

14.♗c4 f5 15.♘g5

Pretty much forced: after 15.e5 h6 16.h4 ♗c6 Black is at least OK.

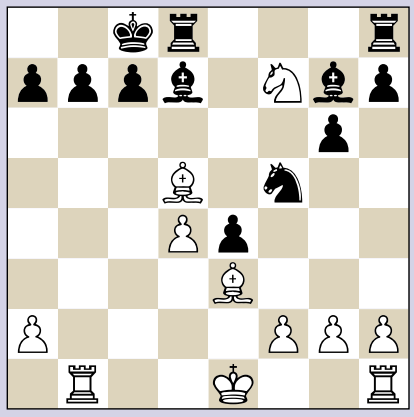
15...fxe4 16.♘f7 ♘f5

During the game I felt I was doing very well here. Carefulish analysis shows White is still probably somewhat better, but he needs to be very precise.



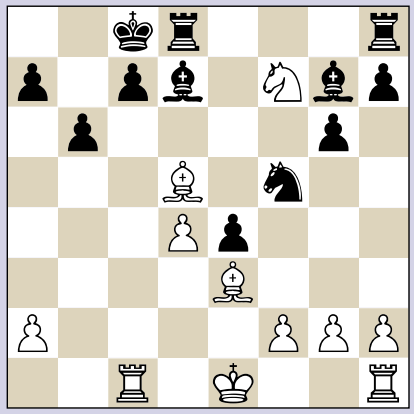
17.0-0

The text-move is also quite good, but Ruslan connected it with a completely erroneous idea.
17.d5 keeps the d-pawn, but at the expense of giving Black some time and killing off the c4 bishop: 17...♗c3+ 18.♗d2 (18.♔e2 ♘xe3 19.♔xe3 – 19.fxe3 ♖hf8 20.♘xd8 ♗g4 mate – 19...♗a5, and with the bishop doing very well on b6, Black has no worries) 18...♗d4 19.♘xh8 ♖xh8 20.0-0 ♖e8 21.♖fe1 a6, and once again I would feel quite safe here as Black.
17.♗d5!, on the other hand, was very strong, but you needed to see two very important tactical points.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) My idea was 17...c6 18.♗xe4 ♘xe3 19.fxe3 ♖de8, but it almost loses to 20.♔d2!!(not 20.♘d6+ ♔c7 21.♘xe8+ ♖xe8 22.♗d3 ♗xd4 23.e4 ♗e6, after which, as I had correctly seen then, Black is almost winning);
B) 17...b6 18.♖c1!,

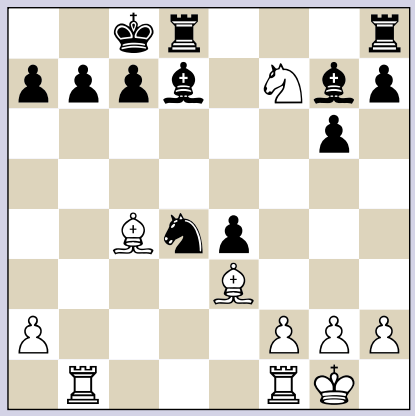


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

creating the huge threat of 19.♗f4, and forcing Black to simplify: 18...♗xd4 (18...♘xd4 19.♖xc7+!! ♔xc7 20.♗f4+ ♔c8 21.♘d6+ ♔b8 22.♘b5+ ♔c8 23.♘xa7 mate is the other point that is very easy to miss) 19.♗xd4 ♘xd4 20.♗xe4. Had the pawns been on g7 and h6 instead, I would fancy Black here, but because of the weakness of Black's kingside, White is better, as witness the following sample line: 20...c5 21.♘xh8 ♖xh8 22.f3 ♗e6 23.h4 ♔c7 24.h5 g5 25.h6.

17...♘xd4

The computer's recommendation 17...♗xd4 did not even occur to me.



18.♗xd4?

There were two moves here which would require a lot of precision from me: Ruslan accompanied taking on d4 with a draw offer, which is becoming a recurring theme in my life, especially when I am in Khanty. After the 2010 Olympiad, people have queued up to explain why this is a profitable strategy against me. The most notable was a lengthy treatise by Ivan Salgado Lopez in this magazine (see New In Chess 2010/7 – ed.) on why exactly

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VLADIMIR BARSKY

Ruslan Ponomariov had to find out that offering a draw to Peter Svidler in Khanty-Mansiysk is not always a profitable strategy.

he felt offering me a draw in the decisive match of the Olympiad with 32 pieces on the board was the correct thing to do (and, oddly, it was – if only because I spent the next hour trying not to explode). But there was also a brief side-note in Ruslan's annotations to our game played at the same Olympiad, which ended in a threefold repetition in a somewhat better position for me. While in hindsight it was a mistake on my part, at the time I felt I was securing match victory for our team, since Malakhov was doing perfectly fine against Efimenko, and we were already leading +1 due to Karjakin's win over Eljanov. Ruslan, however, expressed the opinion that I repeated the moves because of my negative score and general discomfort against him. This time, however, there were no team considerations to distract me.

18.♖fc1, which would be a good test of bottle, since Black has to play 18...♖hf8 here and allow the scary-looking 19.♗a6 ♖xf7 20.♗xb7+ ♔b8, and it turns out White has nothing better here than a perpetual: 21.♗xd4 ♗xd4 22.♗d5+ ♔c8 23.♗xf7 e3 is not really a winning attempt.

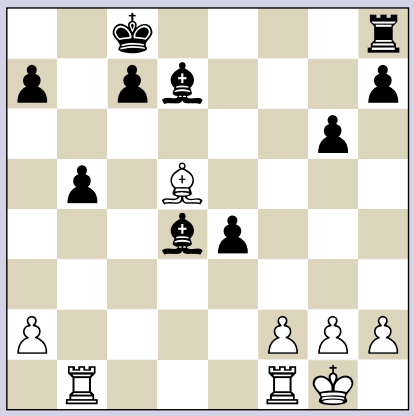
And the even stronger 18.♖fd1! ♗g4 (18...c5 is clearly bad: 19.♘d6+ ♔c7 20.♘xb7; my intended 18...♗a4 fails to 19.♗xd4! ♗xd4 20.♗e6+ ♔b8 21.♖xd4 ♖xd4 22.♘xh8, and White is better) 19.♗xd4 ♗xd4 20.♘xh8 ♗xd1 21.♘f7 ♖d7 22.♗e6, and Black only holds with very accurate play: 22...♗c2 23.♖b5 c5 24.♗xd7+ ♔xd7 25.♖xb7+ ♔e6 26.♘g5+ ♔d6 27.♔f1 ♗d3+ 28.♔e1 c4, and the centralized fist of black pieces ensures that White has nothing better than 29.♘f7+ ♔c6 30.♘d8+ ♔d6 31.♘f7+.

18...♗xd4

Now Black is quite clearly better.

19.♘xh8 ♖xh8 20.♗d5 b5

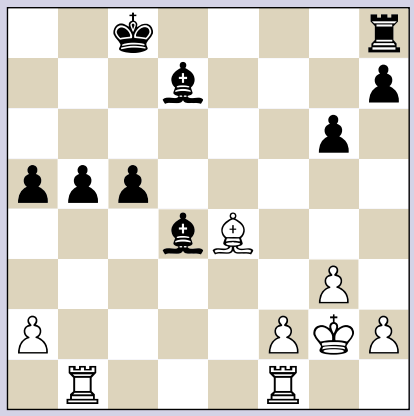
Starting the avalanche. There is very little White can do about the queenside pawns rolling down the board.



21.♗xe4

During the game I was mildly concerned about 21.a4!? and trying to choose between 21...bxa4!? and 21...a6 22.axb5 axb5 23.♖a1 c6!?. However, the machine points out that there is nothing wrong with just taking the rook: 23...♗xa1 24.♖xa1 ♗e8!, and Black is almost winning.

21...c5 22.g3 a5 23.♔g2



23...b4?

It was better to play 23...♔c7 24.f4 ♔d6 first – there is no reason to drive the bishop to c4, where it belongs anyway. But I wanted to make sure that the f-pawn never reaches f5.

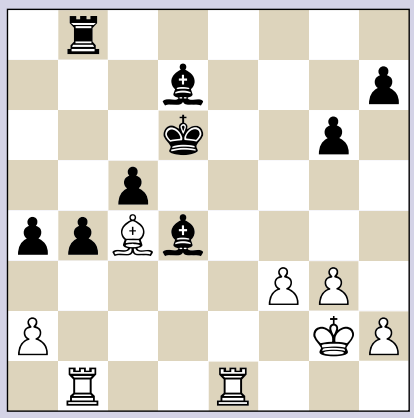
24.♗d5 ♔c7 25.♗c4 ♔d6 26.♖fe1

Now it is somewhat tricky – the blockade is not that easy to break down.

26...a4

After a lengthy think I decided against 26...♗c6+ 27.f3 ♗d5 28.♗xd5 ♔xd5 29.♖e7 a4 30.♖a7 a3. I suspect (and I also had that feeling at the board) that Black is winning here, but I did not want to allow any of his pieces any freedom.

27.f3 ♖b8



28.♖e2?

A very odd decision. White could, and should, have played 28.g4, and Black's position looks beautiful, although it's not immediately obvious how to make progress, since 28...♗b5 allows 29.♖e6+ ♔d7 30.♗d5 (30.♗xb5+ ♔xe6 31.♗xa4 ♔d5 is better for Black – but converting this edge will not be trivial) and the forcing 30...b3 31.axb3 a3

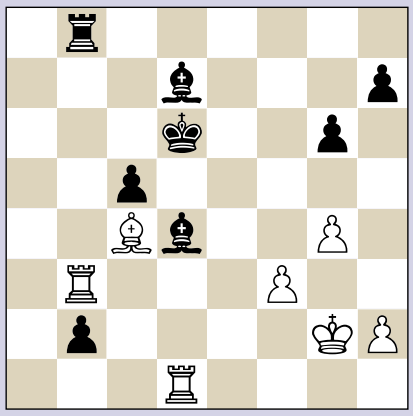
32.b4 cxb4 33.♖xb4 ♗f1+ 34.♔xf1 ♖xb4 35.♖a6 leads to another position in which Black is better, but his edge is unlikely to be enough for a win.

28...♗f5 Now Black breaks through.

29.♖d1 b3 30.axb3 axb3 31.g4 ♗d7 32.♖e3

When Ruslan played 28. ♖e2?, he had possibly missed that 32.♖b2 fails to 32...♗e6.

32...b2 33.♖b3

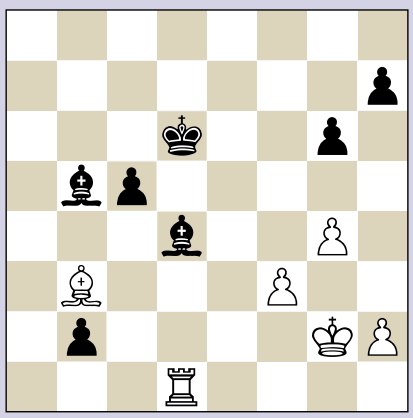


33...♖xb3

Missing an extremely beautiful win: 33...♗a4! 34.♖xb8 (34.♖xd4+ ♔c7!! is the point) 34...♗xd1 35.♗d3 ♔c7 36.♖b5 c4 37.♗xc4 ♗a4 38.♖b4 ♗c3, and White loses the rook. But the text does not spoil anything – yet.

34.♗xb3 ♗b5?

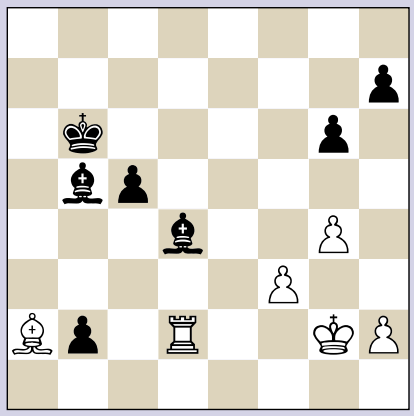
Missing White's reply – I was becoming increasingly agitated by the proximity of the all-important final spot. It was better to play 34...♗e6 35.♗c2 ♔d5 36.♖e1 ♗d7, and the king's run to c3 is much faster than in the game.



35.♗a2! ♔c6

Here it dawned on me that the planned 35...♗a4 36.♖d2 ♗b3 (or 35...♗e2 36.♖d2 ♗c4) allows 37.♖xb2, with an immediate draw. I started looking for an alternative plan, and could only come up with a rather slow-looking king march – which, however, included a little one-move trap...

36.♖d2 ♔b6



37.f4??

Not Ruslan's day.

After 37.♔g3 ♔a5 38.f4 ♔b4 39.♗b1! ♔c3 40.♖c2+ ♔b3 41.♖d2 I would have to prove Black can break through – there is no obvious solution, and in order to push the c-pawn, I would have to move the bishop away from d4, allowing the rook a lot of freedom. But now it's suddenly all over.

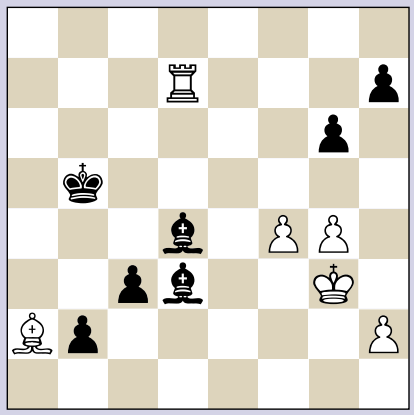
37...♗c6+

The bishop reaches the b1-h7 diagonal, and the win is now very simple.

38.♔g3 ♗e4 39.♖d1 ♔b5 40.♖e1 ♗d3 41.♖e7

I could stop and re-check everything here, and finally settled on:

41...c4 42.♖d7 c3



43.♖d5+

43.♖xd4 c2 44.♖xd3 worried me for a while due to my having a lot of previous problems with ♕ v ♖ endgames – but then I realized that I could play 44...c1♕! here, and after the inevitable ♕a1 White won't even be able to reach ♕ v ♖.

43...♗c5 And White resigned – the pawns are unstoppable.

■ ■ ■

So, now we've reached the final!

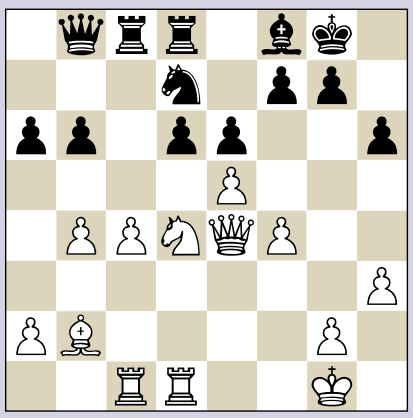
'Sanya and I discussed the final when it was all over. He said that in the first game, not counting the "provocative" opening, at a certain point all of Black's play followed the best line. That says something, as it means that my head was working very well. Game two can't be considered a game. Once again, people might think that after winning one game I decided to dry up the rest of the match. But I didn't come out planning to make a draw! However, I immediately messed up the move order and instead of one position I got a completely different one, in which to avoid making things worse I had to do what I did. Obviously the move a2-a4 meant that I didn't want to get a position with opposite-side castling and play for mate, but my plan wasn't to make a draw in 15 moves at all. Well, why would I want that? The match was long! If it had consisted of two games, then of course I would have played for a draw.

'In the third game I surprised Sanya in the opening. I had been preparing this variation of the Spanish with the move 3...♗c5 for days, and he was apparently surprised at the board. But when I talked with him after the game it became clear that he knew considerably more there than I did. He was let down by the feeling that we already discussed in the example of my second match with Kamsky: he was looking for a forced win. And he didn't find one. As a result he got a position that was also very unpleasant for Black, but... Once again, Sanya says that from a certain point I made a long series of almost only moves.

'The last game... I think that from a certain point I redeemed myself with my play for 3.♗b5+, ♗b5-e2 and

everything that I did in the opening. I have to admit honestly: my hands were shaking a little! After all, it was a big event, a big potential success in my career, and I just had to "sit it out" in one last game! Not go crazy in a single individual game! To be honest, I planned on playing some kind of Najdorf again. But I thought that out of the many openings in which Sanya could outplay me, the Najdorf was the least likely, as I could give check with the bishop. And the check has such a reputation that after it you inevitably get a draw. So I thought any other opening was more likely.

'When he confidently made the moves 1...c5 and 2...d6, though, I sat for about three minutes thinking about how to play from there. Then I thought: if I go 3.d4 and something doesn't work out for me, I'll be racking my brains, why didn't I give check? Romance is romance, image is image, but it's important to demonstrate a result sometimes! Having got so close, I wanted to win the tournament, after all! As a result, by the 15th move I got the kind of position in which it was simply a miracle that White wasn't far worse. An ideal situation for Black: all the pieces on the board, very rich play – he had a million plans. I somehow managed to stabilize things, and not give Black anything to eat immediately, after which I pulled myself together and began just playing chess. Starting from a certain point, I again can't reproach myself for anything. It's still nice in the last game of the World Cup, in which you have to get a draw as White, to make the move **26.♘xe6!**.



VLADIMIR BARSKY

Peter Svidler has played 3.♗b5+ in the decisive fourth game. 'I thought: if I go 3.d4 and something doesn't work out for me, I'll be racking my brains, why didn't I give check?'

'I'm pleased with myself. And the "silicon" says that this was a correct sacrifice. The computer confirms that when the pawns reached c7 and d6 I had the opportunity to get an enormous advantage, but I saw the position that it considers winning, and didn't think it was winning. For eight minutes I thought it was terrible not to win the piece back immediately, because if, God forbid, nothing came of this, a rather comical situation would arise. You'd sit and think: "But I could have gone ♗a3-b2 on the 34th move and won the knight back! Why on earth didn't I eat it?" That would be painful, I'd be tormented for years...

'Of course, if I'd been absolutely certain that I had a different continuation that won, I wouldn't have thought for a second before going that way. But since I thought that the position there was unclear, and I'd found how to win the piece back, I won it back.'

What was it like to meet a person in the final with whom you had consulted 'en route', you'd helped each other? Did that place any limitations on you?

'The limitations were exclusively opening ones. When Sanya won the semi-final we had dinner together for the last time before the end of the tournament and decided:

a) thank God, we don't have to fight for third place or a place in the Candidates' tournament;

b) the tournament is already a success, so we'll play calmly and see who gets what. The situation isn't ideal, but... We've known each other for many years, and I'm sure this match won't affect our relationship.'

What are your ambitions now?

'It will be funny to say even now that I don't have any particular ambitions. Considering the difficult relations I've had with World Cups... It's not that I'd finally drawn a line under my struggle for the World Championship, but I thought that this World Cup was perhaps my last chance in the near future. Before the start I thought that about 20-25 people had real chances of getting into the Candidates' tournament. It would be funny to claim that even now, after this win, I haven't changed anything, I'm not going to prepare, but just show up at the Candidates', and my head will be throbbing there. It's obvious why it will be throbbing: the kind of people will be gathering that if I don't do anything with my repertoire for White it will be very difficult.

'To all appearances the autumn will be completely crazy for me. I have to finish this little marathon, then I have to sit down and make some kind of plan for the next year, so that the Nth chance that I've been given isn't foolishly squandered.' ■

Short Stories

Old Men

It was an innocent expression, uttered without malice or the slightest trace of irony, but it stunned me. 'Old players like you...' Was I really old? Somebody obviously thought so... Ten years later, in San Luis, Argentina, in 2005, I reminded Veselin Topalov of his words. The vigorous new World Champion, just 30 years of age, had reached the exact chronological milestone at which he had previously deemed me to have entered dotage. Understandably, he had forgotten ever making this remark which, being a touch hurtful, was rather more memorable to me than to him, but we laughed together at the tactlessness of youth...

I suppose I had become acutely conscious of the passage of years even earlier – at the VSB tournament in Amsterdam, in May 1993, to be precise. While glancing through the programme I suddenly realized that, at the venerable age of 27, I was already the oldest participant. Admittedly there were only four players in total, but nevertheless as one accustomed to being described in my youth – to the point of tedium – as a 'prodigy', it was significant.

I am now the oldest player in tournaments with great regularity. Where did all my contemporaries go? Some retired: in Valery Salov's case, absurdly soon, in Garry Kasparov's, only after conquering all before him. More often though, players don't leave the game but instead descend into mediocrity. Andrei Sokolov's bright star dimmed so long ago that the younger generation could be forgiven for being unaware he was ever a Candidates' Finalist. Rather more typical, however, is the gradual decline of, say, a Jaan Ehlvest. He still plays a fair game, of course, but nowhere near his level of the late 1980s.

It once used to be said that chess players peaked around the age of 35. To verify this one must not rely on ever-inflating Elo ratings, which grossly distort comparisons between the different aeons – as far too many people are apt to forget – but instead turn to rankings. I will leave it to the statisticians to make the precise calculations, but I am fairly certain that the apex of a player's career comes a lot sooner these days. I suspect my own career trajectory is not untypical: I entered the top ten as a 21-year-old, but exited for the last time, in 1997, at the age of 32. My best years were somewhere in the middle. As a human being, a man in his 40s is merely middle-aged; as a politician, perhaps even considered relatively young; but as a chess player one is a veritable dinosaur. How curious then that the 2012 World Championship will be played between a 42-year-old Indian and an Israeli challenger nudging 44. In many ways this is simply a return to the status quo ante. Take a famous tournament like Montreal 1979, for example: no less than four of the ten participants were in their forties. Tal won (together with Karpov) and Larsen ended bottom. Portisch and Spassky finished, roughly speaking, in the middle. Incredibly Efim Geller was a doddery 54 when he won the Soviet Championship that same year! Indeed, oldies were very much part of the furniture in that era.

I recently asked the Dutch sage Genna Sosonko whether he thought that next year's Anand-Gelfand gigantomachy and the continued (erratic) genius of Vasily Ivanchuk were signs of a Jurassic revival. He immediately shook his head. No, Genna opined, they are just part of a particularly brilliant generation. Perhaps having grown up in the pre-computer era and being young enough to successfully adapt to new technology, when it came along, gave them an advantage. After all, there are more ways to analyse a position than flicking on Houdini. But whatever the reason, they are an exception. Chess is, in essence, a game for children. Computers have exacerbated the trend towards youth because they now have an immensely powerful learning tool at their disposal and can absorb vast amounts of information extremely quickly.

Given that writers, say, often continue improving into their fifties, why is it that chess players tend to fade so soon? After all, it is hardly the most physical of sports. Bodily deterioration matters, but less so than is com-

monly assumed. For example, Mikhail Tal was probably the unhealthiest man I have met in my entire life. I once saw him being physically carried by Vladimir Bagirov, in Subotica 1987, crying out in pain. His trousers were hitched up and his leg, which clearly had no proper blood circulation, was literally blue. It was a ghastly sight that will be forever etched in my memory. Nevertheless, despite being a chain smoker, a drinker and missing various internal organs, the great Latvian remained a formidable opponent up until practically the end of his life...

So if it is not primarily a question of physical fitness, what is it? I think John Nunn hit the nail on the head when he said to me many years ago that loss of motivation is by far the biggest factor in the slide from the peaks. People get married, have kids, and priorities change. They often just cannot be bothered to do the stupendous amount of work necessary to maintain their level – let alone improve it. As the saying goes, 'If you fail to prepare, prepare to fail'. Let's be frank – chess is a wonderful game to play, but some important aspects of studying – such as rote memorisation of sharp (computer-generated) variations – are desperately dull. Unfortunately if you don't do it, in the long run you are doomed.

I like to think that the Russian chess hegemony was, in part, due to the fact that there was bugger-all else to do in the Soviet Union. Analysing the King's Indian, or even the Petroff, is a hell of a lot more interesting than standing in a bread queue for three hours. Now that this glorious edifice of communism has crumbled into history, other enticements have appeared to lure the weak-willed away from chess monasticism. If you are a monomaniac like Viktor Kortchnoi, you can, of course, stave off the onset of chess senility for a very long time. However, if you are a normal person, unprepared to work like a dog on a daily basis, can you at least mitigate the disadvantage?

I believe so. At the Dresden Olympiad, in 2008, Yury Razuvaev offered an excellent piece of advice, which is applicable to anyone suffering from acute lazy-middle-aged-git-syndrome. 'Nigel, you ought to play more',

'Analysing the King's Indian, or even the Petroff, is a hell of a lot more interesting than standing in a bread queue for three hours.'

he said. Yury went on to explain that he knew very well from experience the process by which, as time passed, the unwillingness to study increased. He correctly surmised that (with a few exceptions) the only time your columnist is willing to work hard on his game is when he is at a tournament. Ergo, the key to maintaining a reasonable level of play is to keep oneself constantly match-fit.

Another important component to staying in form is to actually enjoy oneself. I was reminded of this after seeing a photo of a beaming Matthew Sadler triumphing with an incredible 8/9 in Oslo. In his case, the amazing English comeback kid has managed to overcome an entire decade of rust through (suddenly?) regaining his appetite for the game. It is important to remember that one usually begins chess because it is great fun, not because it is a smart career move. Not long ago I asked Sergey Tiviakov whether he got bored playing the same openings all the time. He candidly admitted that he did. In chess, as in love, a little experimentation does not come amiss. Dabbling in something (or someone) new is not without risk, but overall one is enriched by the experience – or so I am told.

Tiviakov, of course, has his own method of maintaining hunger – by visiting new countries, a passion which I also share. Chess tourism is oft derided, but it logically makes a lot of sense. If playing in the same cold and windy place for the nth time makes you prone to depression, it might be wise to consider playing somewhere else. If one is dropping pieces in Thailand, at least there exist some compensations: a swim, a green curry and a visit to the massage parlour will soon perk you up in time for the next game. A good mood does not necessarily guarantee good results, but the converse is almost invariably true...

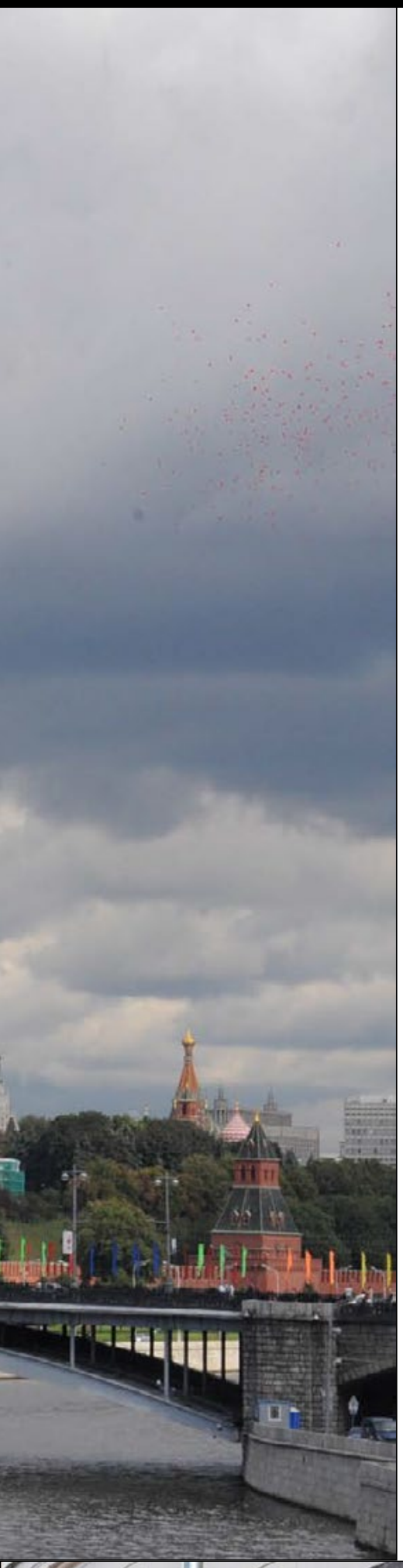
Recently I teased Hikaru Nakamura that he had been very adequately replaced by the veteran Yasser Seirawan at the World Team Championship in China. He laughed with the cockiness of youth, but Yaz, rolling back the years, then proceeded to put in a splendid 2773 performance. Ordinarily I would have been delighted with the result of my friend and colleague until it suddenly dawned on me that the punk upstart had robbed me of the sobriquet the 'oldest player in the top 100'. What an outrage! ■

The Russian Chess Federation celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Mikhail Botvinnik with a long weekend of festivities, the main act being a rapid exhibition tournament with the four best players on the planet that was won with superior ease by World Champion Vishy Anand. As the standard-bearer of the Soviet school of chess, 'the Patriarch' led his country to a global hegemony that lasted for decades. The new leadership of the RCF spares no effort or money to bring back those glory days.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam

Moscow on the move

Playing with great ease World Champion Vishy Anand won half his games and drew the rest to finish well ahead of Levon Aronian and Vladimir Kramnik.



In spite of imposing clouds it was a sunny and dry day when Vishy Anand and Vladimir Kramnik unveiled a new commemorative plaque of Mikhail Moiseevich Botvinnik on the facade of the Central Chess Club on Gogolevsky Boulevard.

PHOTOS: NEW IN CHESS

On the day that Vishy Anand and Vladimir Kramnik unveiled in perfect unison a new commemorative plaque of Mikhail Moiseevich Botvinnik on the facade of the Central Chess Club, the weather in Moscow was gorgeous. The sky was adorned by imposing clouds that brought to mind 17th-century Dutch paintings, but the sun was in charge and everyone present on Gogolevsky Boulevard was basking in its soothing rays. That was remarkable, as the previous day had been grey and rainy, and the same drab weather would return the next day. Was Mikhail Moiseevich, or 'the Patriarch' as he is often called, revealing yet another of his hidden talents? He probably wasn't. The fine weather was the result of a clever idea of the leaders of the Russian Chess Federation, who had decided to have the ceremony on Moscow Day, the holiday celebrating the city's foundation with parades, concerts, performances and what have you. Together with Victory Day and Russia Day, Moscow Day is one of three privileged days when the local authorities try to guarantee dry and sunny weather using the Soviet-era technique of seeding rain clouds with dry ice in order to prevent these clouds from spoiling the festivities. At the precious sum of five million dollars for three days the technique is not cheap and there are no guarantees, but it was amazing to see how this time, too, it worked again.

Manipulating unknown forces, or at least forces that you appear not to have complete control of, is a common wish of people in power. Likewise, the Russian Chess Federation has no doubts that they remain the superpower in chess, but they crave the successes that should come with that status. Following lacklustre Olympiad performances (Bled 2002 was the last time they won!), the disaster at the World Teams in Ningbo again shook their confidence. But they feel that the tide is turning and the all-Russian final at the World Cup in Khanty-Mansiysk was welcomed with relief. To regain the supremacy that almost felt like a natural right during the height of Botvinnik's career, the Russian Chess Federation is sparing no effort. With their heavyweight political backing, getting money is hardly an issue, and with unlimited ambitions the new leadership tries to give chess at all levels a boost.

Ilya Levitov, the young new President, believes that chess has lost much of its popularity and should try to win back fans and spectators with events that appeal to both the players and the audience. As one of FIDE's vice-presidents he is involved in the plans to 'modernize' chess that have been met with criticism and suspicion from those that fear that classical chess is under attack. In a recent interview, Levitov compared classical chess to opera and didn't hide the fact that this is not the music he listens to most of the time. He also wants to see 'rock chess', chess that will draw lots of young enthusiasts. He tried to reassure his critics by stating that beautiful classical tournaments like the Tal Memorial will not go away. A promise he intends to keep if we look at the formidable line-up of this year's edition. In November, the four participants in the Botvinnik Memorial will return to Moscow, where they will be joined by Karjakin, Ivanchuk, Nakamura, Gelfand, Svidler and Nepomniachtchi to form the strongest classical tournament of 2011.

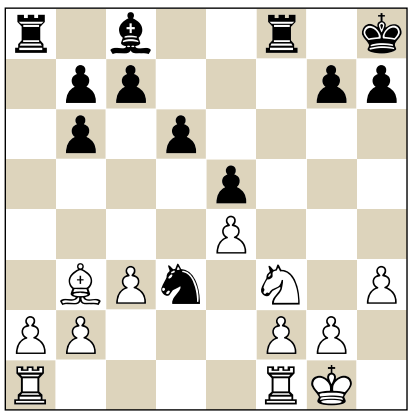
The Botvinnik Memorial was a first attempt by the RCF to stage an exhibition aimed at entertaining a broad range of chess lovers. From various sides it was pointed out that it was

doubtful whether a rapid event was a befitting tribute to a stern traditionalist who was known to loathe rapid and blitz tournaments. Of course, these critics had a point, but on the whole such reasoning does not sound very productive. Who knows if Botvinnik wouldn't have developed a taste for rapid chess if he had lived to be a hundred years old? And perhaps he did play rapid games that we don't know of. After all, the famous story that he only played blitz once in his life ('on a train in 1929') was debunked by Mark Taimanov shortly before the Memorial at a (rapid!) tournament for veterans in Suzdal in honour of Botvinnik. Taimanov revealed that in 1947, when he was helping Botvinnik with his preparations for the 1948 World Championship, his boss invited him to a secret session of 10 blitz games one evening. Taimanov won 7-3 and was asked never to tell anyone about these games.

Inviting Anand, Carlsen, Aronian and Kramnik was a guarantee for lively chess, but to further enliven the show a novelty was introduced that was thought up by Kramnik. Shortly after the opening, the tournament director could stop the games and while one of the players got a headphone so as not to hear what was said, his opponent was asked to explain to the public how he assessed the position and what his plans were. After he had done so, he got the headphones and his opponent was asked to do the same. These breaks were certainly revealing, but they could also lead to awkward situations. Anand saw his white game against Carlsen stopped by Levitov when it had become clear to the experts that he had seriously misplayed the opening. While the Indian grandmaster tried as best as he could to say something sensible about the position, he saw Aronian and Kramnik from the corner of his eye watching him from a distance, almost rolling off their chairs in amusement over his predicament.

Inviting Anand, Carlsen, Aronian and Kramnik was a guarantee for lively chess.

A couple of moves later the following position was reached:



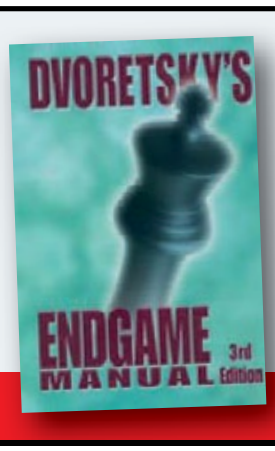
Anand-Carlsen
position after 21.♘f3

Here Carlsen played **21...♖f6** This allows White to escape to a draw. He would have been in dire straits after 21...♘xb2, but Carlsen probably thought that after 22.♘g5 h6 23.♘f7+ ♔h7 24.f4 White still had some random counterplay. However, Black could prevent this with 22...g6. **22.♖ad1 ♘xb2 23.♖d2 ♘a4 24.♘xe5 ♗e6 25.♘g4 ♗xg4 26.hxg4 ♘xc3 27.♖e1 h6** Draw.

This was the only moment of discomfort that Anand experienced. In the other games he was never in any danger, and winning three and drawing the others he took first place well ahead of Aronian and Kramnik. His best effort, his black win against Aronian, you will find in the games section further down, with notes by the winner.

Carlsen sensationally finished in last place, offering interesting study material for those interested in the combination of physical fitness and good results. On the first day he was troubled by a cold and drew all three of his games. The next day he felt much better and lost all three games, probably a unique sequence in his career.

One of the games Carlsen lost caused some controversy. In his black game against the Norwegian, Aronian was in an inspired mood and sacrificed two exchanges to win an exciting game. There certainly were moments in the complications where Carlsen could have defended better, but the overall reaction to Aronian's dashing win was one of admiration and praise. Commentator Evgeny Bareev was so impressed that he came running after the winner shouting 'Aronian, Aronian!' and when the



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Armenian turned around Bareev got on his knees, asked if he could shine his shoes, and not waiting for an answer, immediately set to work.

Other people, at a safe distance from Moscow, were less impressed. Writing for *The Week in Chess*, Mark Crowther, who had been listening to Bareev's commentary online, thought his praise was 'way over the top', making one wonder if chess can be made attractive at all. If games such as these don't get you fired up only because an engine reveals a number of imperfections, then what will? For some reason the games could not really please Crowther (Anand's white win over Aronian 'might easily be described as complete garbage') and it is hard to understand why. A possible explanation may be that he was just too busy (the World Cup had just started too) to fully appreciate the games, as may be gleaned from one of the tweets he sent out around the time when he attacked Bareev: 'Going slightly mad with all this chess. And I have a mag to write!'

Anyway, it is sad to see how for many people engines take away the joy of the game. How much more fun would they have if they followed the games with their own brains instead of seeing these games as some kind of background noise to the computer assessments they are staring at. But they, too, get a second chance at the end of this article, where they can try to relive Aronian's achievement with his own (critical) comments!

Apart from this rapid tournament and the women's tournament, won by Victoria Cmilyte ahead of Elina Danielian, Tatiana Kosintseva and Humpy Koneru, there were various other enjoyable activities. At the prize-giving, a game of Botvinnik against Smyslov was demonstrated with the active participation of the grandmasters present, and souvenirs were presented to the youngsters that had done well in the simuls that afternoon. With an eye to the future, the federation had invited close to a hundred young players from all over the country to come to Moscow and watch the games. When I saw them on the first day, I was inadvertently reminded of the old Florencio Campomanes trick (fill an almost empty hall with a bus of school kids), but it soon dawned on me that these boys and girls really knew how to play. And in case the players had their doubts about the chess level of all those kids with blue Botvinnik T-shirts in the hall, they found out when each of them faced 10 promises on the final day. Only Anand emerged with a clean score, Carlsen and Aronian spilled half a point and Kramnik had to allow two draws.

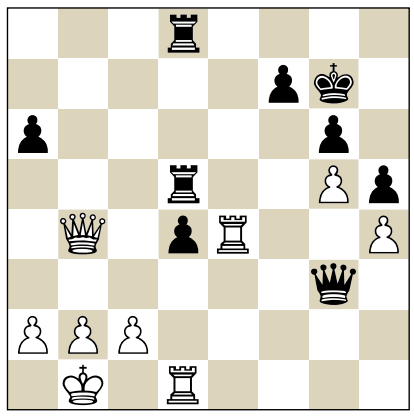
As a foretaste of the future we will show you two games of boys that, according to Bareev, will 'no doubt' become grandmasters. David Paravyan, rated 2192, is 13 years old, lives in Moscow and claimed third place in the European Championship U-12 last year. This is how he drew against Carlsen.

NEW IN CHESS

Magnus Carlsen patiently waits as grandmaster-in-the-bud, 13-year-old David Paravyan ponders his next move.

PU 9.10 – B00
Magnus Carlsen
David Paravyan
Moscow simul 2011

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.f3 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.♗e3 a6 6.♕d2 b5 7.0-0-0 b4 8.♘ce2 c5 9.dxc5 ♕a5 10.♔b1 ♗e6 11.♘c1 dxc5 12.♗h6 0-0 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.♘ge2 ♘c6 15.♘f4 ♘d4 16.♘xe6+ ♘xe6 17.♗c4 ♘d4 18.♘b3 ♕c7 19.♕e3 e5 20.h4 h6 21.g4 ♘d7 22.♗d5 ♖ad8 23.♘xd4 cxd4 24.♕d2 ♘b6 25.f4 ♘xd5 26.exd5 ♖xd5 27.fxe5 ♕xe5 28.g5 h5 29.♖he1 ♕g3 30.♖e4 ♖fd8 31.♕xb4



31...d3 32.cxd3 ♖xd3 33.♖c1 ♖d2 34.♕c3+ ♕xc3 35.♖xc3 ♖h2 36.a4 ♖dd2 37.♖b3 ♖dg2 38.♖f4 ♖f2 39.♖bb4 a5 40.♖xf2 ♖xf2 41.♖c4 ♖f5 42.b4 axb4 43.♔b2 f6 44.♖c7+ ♔f8 45.gxf6 ♖xf6 46.♔b3 ♔e8 47.a5 ♔d8 48.♖c4 g5 49.hxg5 ♖g6 50.♔xb4 ♖xg5 51.a6 ♖g1 52.♔b5 ♖b1+

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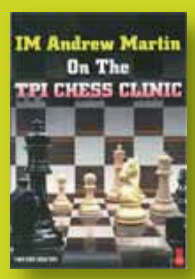

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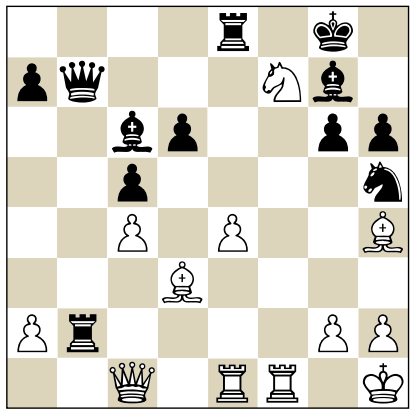
53.♔c6 ♖a1 54.♔b7 ♖b1+ 55.♔a7 h4 56.♖xh4 ♔c8 57.♖h7 ♖b2 58.♖b7 ♖c2 And drawn after a few more moves.

Maxim Vavulin is also 13 years old, is rated 2242, and he also lives in Moscow. Earlier this year he took third place in the Russian U-14 Championship. He made Vladimir Kramnik sweat.

BI 18.6 – A57
Vladimir Kramnik
Maxim Vavulin
Moscow simul 2011

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.♘d2 bxc4 5.e4 c3 6.bxc3 g6 7.c4 d6 8.♘gf3 ♗g7 9.♖b1 0-0 10.♗d3 ♘bd7 11.0-0 ♘g4 12.♗e2 ♘ge5 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.f4 ♘d7 15.♘f3 ♘b6 16.♗e3 e6 17.dxe6 ♗xe6 18.♕c2 ♕e7 19.♗f2 ♗d7 20.♗d3 ♗a4 21.♕d2 ♖fe8 22.♗h4 ♕c7 23.f5 ♘d7 24.♔h1 ♗c6 25.♖be1 ♖ab8 26.♗g3 ♖b2 27.♕f4 ♘f6 28.♗h4 ♘h5 29.♕c1 ♕b7 30.fxg6 fxg6 31.♘g5 h6 32.♘f7



32...♗xe4 33.♘xd6 ♗xg2+ 34.♔g1 ♗d4+ 35.♗f2 ♖xe1 36.♕xe1 ♕d7 37.♗xd4 ♗xf1 38.♗xb2 ♗xd3 39.♕e5 ♔f8 40.♔f2 ♗xc4 41.♕h8+ ♗g8 42.♕xh6+ ♔e7 43.♘e4 ♕f5+ 44.♔e3 ♗d5 45.♕h7+ ♔d8 46.♕h8+ ♔e7 47.♕h7+ ♔d8 Draw.

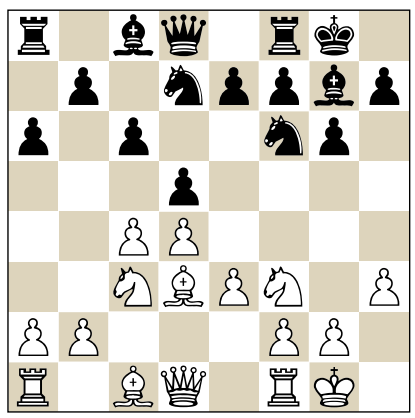
On a final note, let's briefly return to the man in whose honour the events were organized. At the initial press conference the players were asked to say a few words about Botvinnik. Vishy Anand felt privileged that he had met the sixth World Champion and recalled his impressions from 1992, when Botvinnik and Smyslov were guests of honour in Linares, where Anand was playing a match against Ivanchuk. With a broad smile Anand remembered that every time Botvinnik spoke, Smyslov would look like a small boy, in spite of the fact that he had beaten his rival in a world championship match.

Although he was only four years old when Botvinnik died in 1995, Magnus Carlsen also used the opportunity to take the microphone. Having explained that obviously he had never met Botvinnik he said that he would like to add that 'contrary to many young colleagues I do believe that it makes sense to study the classics.'

NOTES BY
Vishy Anand

SL 10.2 – D94
Levon Aronian
Vishy Anand
Moscow 2011 (2)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e3 g6 Played on a whim. The Schlechter Variation has been kind of topical lately. For instance, I faced it a couple of times in Nanjing last year.
5.♘f3 ♗g7 6.h3
And of course Levon went for his h3-system, which he uses a lot.
6...0-0 7.♗d3 a6 8.0-0 ♘bd7



Now we are mixing lots and lots of plans and we end up with a hybrid

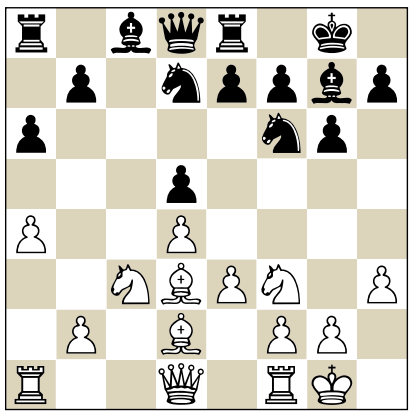
Vishy Anand tells the audience (via interpreter WGM Anna Burtasova) what he thinks of the game so far, while Vladimir Kramnik awaits his turn listening to music.

of systems, but that seems to be typical these days. Now it's not only the Schlechter Variation, but it could also easily be a Chebanenko.

9.a4 It seems logical to aim for a5 and stop Black from doing anything on the queenside, but he wasn't too happy with it afterwards and thought that 9.b3 would have been a good alternative.

9...♖e8 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.♗d2

This is quite sensible, as White may want to put his queen on b3.



11...b6

Black also plays a waiting move. Normally, if White plays a4, this means that Black's a6 pawn is going to be slightly under pressure, but there is nothing immediate here.

If Black plays 11...e5, White goes 12.dxe5 ♘xe5 13.♘xe5 ♖xe5 14.♘e2 and follows up with ♗c3, which is kind of unpleasant for Black.

12.♕e2

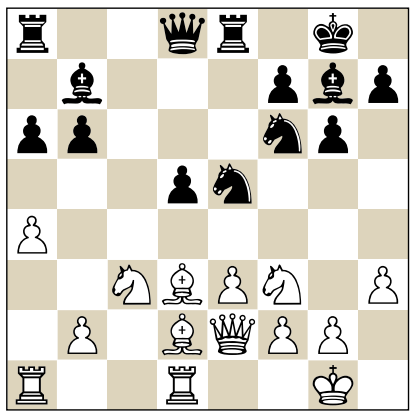
I had been expecting 12.♕b3. The text has one disadvantage: it stops the retreat of the knight to e2, which I just mentioned.

So here already I could play 12...e5, but as I didn't see how White could avoid this central push, I first went:

12...♗b7 13.♖fd1

Setting up a battery against the queen. When the d-file suddenly opens, there will be a pin.

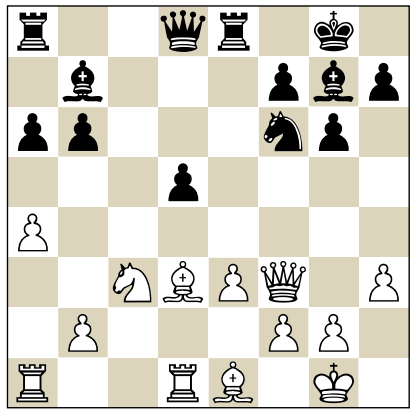
13...e5 14.dxe5 ♘xe5



15.♗e1

Played rather quickly. He could have gone 15.♘xe5 ♖xe5 16.♗e1, when 16...d4 doesn't work because of 17.♗c4. However, this is not entirely clear, as you have to reckon with 17...♖g5 and so on. But obviously at the board we had to go by our impressions. But this is easier for Black, for if he doesn't play 16...d4, fine, whereas White has to decide whether it will work or not.

15...♘xf3+ 16.♕xf3



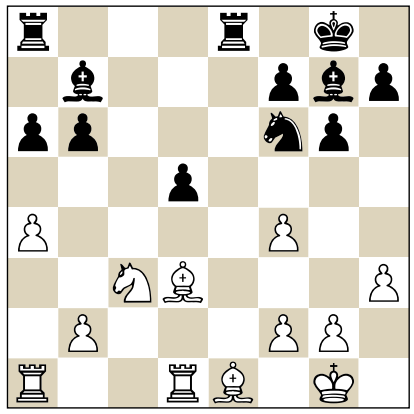
16...♕b8

There doesn't seem to be a real difference between this move and 16...♕c7, but when in doubt just play 16...♕b8, as after 16...♕c7, 17.♖c1 may work, you never know.

The text seems sensible. Suddenly White is left with no choice but to play 17.♕f4, since 17.♕e2 runs into 17...d4 and the point is that my queen takes away every dark square from his.

17.♕f4 ♕xf4 18.exf4

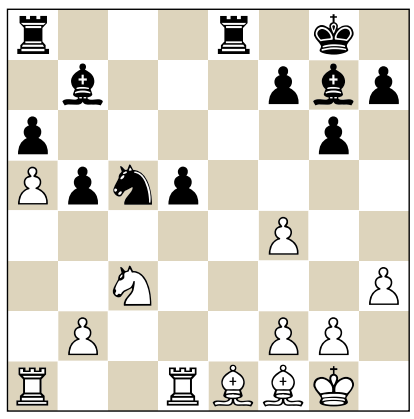
And suddenly Black is already better.



18...♘d7

This is an important move. There is no need to play ...d4 right away, and now 19.b4 is not possible because of 19...♖xe1+ followed by 20...♗xc3.

19.a5 ♘c5 20.♗f1 b5



21.f3 Not a pleasant move to make, but it solves White's problem getting his bishop out to f2.

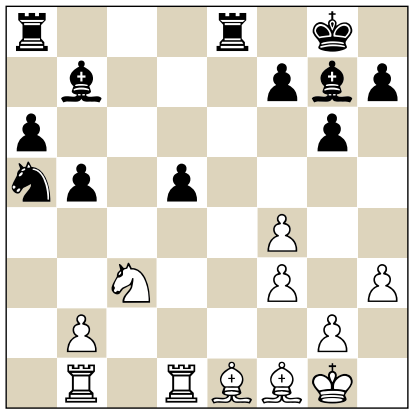
21...♘b3

Black has several attractive options, and I think this is a reasonable one.

22.♖ab1

He decides to give up a pawn. In case of 22.♖a3, I'd go 22...♘d4, and besides ...b4 I am also threatening ...♘c2 and jumping all over the place.

22...♘xa5

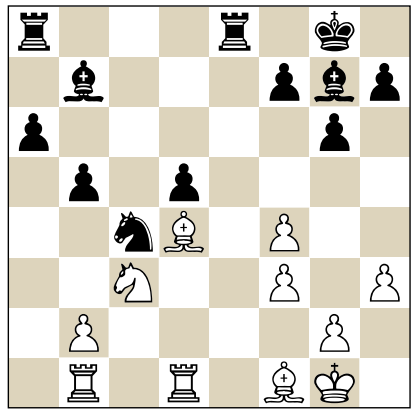


23.♗f2

Surprisingly, this position is more lively than I first thought. To begin with, I cannot go 23...♖ad8 because of 24.♗b6 (although obviously Black would have excellent compensation for the exchange, but this is not what you want), but I had seen:

23...♘c4 And I pretty much thought: game over.

24.♗d4 But now I realized that even though Black is technically winning, things are not that easy, as the d5 pawn is well blockaded and it's not that easy to create a passed pawn with the two queenside pawns. It will be tricky to break down White's resistance.



24...♘e3 An interesting move here was 24...♖e1, when I get rid of a pair of rooks, while 25.♖xe1 ♗xd4+ 26.♔h2 ♘xb2 also looks very nice for Black. Perhaps this was stronger, as it would be the game with one set of rooks off, which removes all the danger.

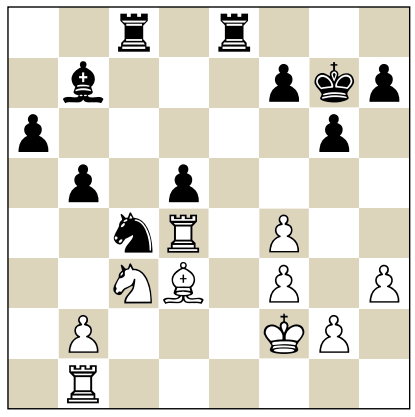
25.♖d3 ♗xd4 26.♖xd4 ♖ac8

I had assumed that this move would give me a comfortable edge, because my knight can go to f5, followed by ...d4, the knight can go to c4, it can go to c2, and so on.

27.♗d3 ♔g7

I put the king here so that at some point ♘xd5 would not threaten ♘f6+.

28.♔f2 ♘c4



29.♘e2 The first little detail. He could have played 29.♘xd5 ♘d2, and I thought, rook moves, knight b3 and White resigns, but as I found out when I returned to the hotel, White can play 30.♗xb5 ♘xb1 31.♗xe8 ♖xe8 32.♘e3, when the black knight cannot go anywhere, so White will go ♖d1 and capture it. Black would still be better after 32...♖b8, but it certainly would have been a shock if he had played 29.♘xd5 anyway.

29...♘d2 30.♖d1 ♘b3 31.♖b4 ♘c5 32.♖d4

A bit of a surprise, but actually logical. With the rook on b4 I am threatening ...a5 and he never can play ♖xb5 because of ...♘xd3+, followed by ...♗a6, and game over. After 32.♖d4 it's trickier to move my a- and b-pawns.

32...♗c6 33.f5 a5 34.♗b1

I was starting to get a bit annoyed that we had ended up here. He could

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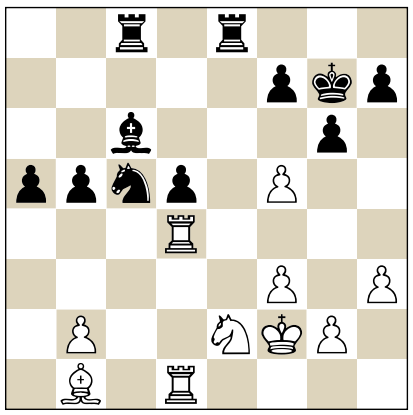
have played 34.b4, and now, after 34...♘b3, there is 35.bxa5, when the computer doesn't even want to take the exchange but suggests 35...♖xe2+ 36.♗xe2 ♘xd4. The point is that the pawns on b5 and d5 have become a little weak.

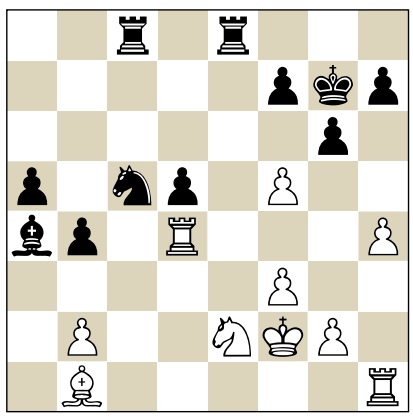


34...b4

Now I was much happier. My pawns are much better placed to advance and they are much more difficult to attack. The pawn on b4 is much better than on b5: the knight doesn't come to c3, etc. And on top of all this I can play ...♘a4, and the b2 pawn may drop off. All this explains why he should have played 34.b4 and I should have avoided that possibility with 24...♖e1.

35.h4 ♗a4 Chasing his rook away.

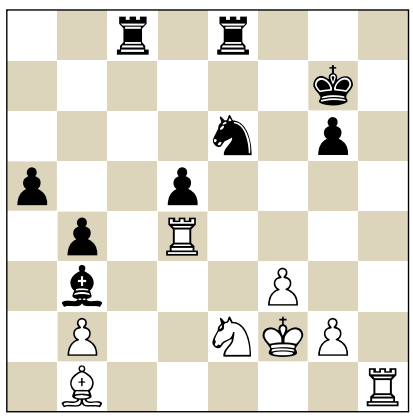
36.♖h1



I suddenly have to watch my king.

36...♗b3 37.fxg6 hxg6 38.h5 ♘e6 39.hxg6 fxg6

Of course I am not going to play 39...♘xd4 40.♖h7+.

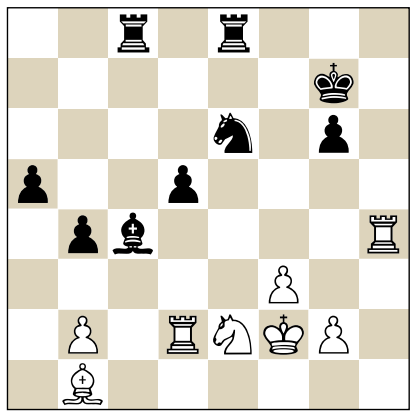


40.♖d2

Better was 40.♖g4, since he can meet 40...♗c2 with 41.♘d4. Black is still better, but you get the feeling that it is slipping out of control a bit. The black king is loose and there will be a lot of checks, that kind of thing.

40...♗c4 Again I was happy. Nothing can stop ...a4 and ...a3, I thought.

41.♖h4



A good resource. We were both running short on time and this is exactly the kind of position in which Aronian is incredibly dangerous. But somehow I survived.

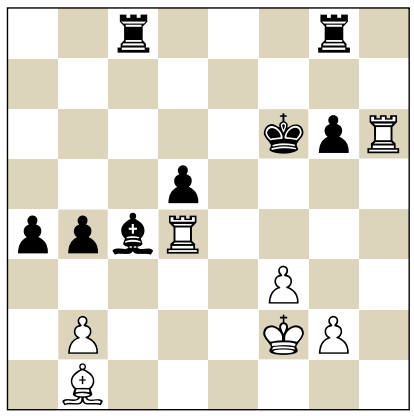
41...♔f6 42.♖h6

After 42.♖g4 I can just play 42...g5.

42...♖g8 43.♘d4

This I was happy with, as I had seen:

43...♘xd4 44.♖xd4 a4



Now my pawn is getting to a3, so even if somehow I lose the g6 pawn I am winning on the other side. And in fact, it ended pretty fast.

45.♖h7

If 45.♖g4 then 45...a3 46.♗xg6 ♔e5, and White is lost.

45...a3 46.bxa3 bxa3 47.♖f4+ ♔e5

The point is that my king is never going to get in any mating net.

48.g3 ♖b8

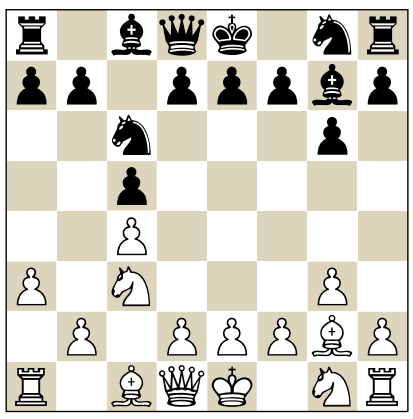
I could also have played 48...a2. White resigned.

Moscow

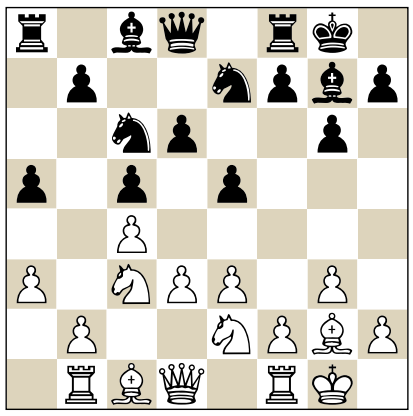
NOTES BY
Levon Aronian

EO 29.10 – A36
Magnus Carlsen
Levon Aronian
Moscow 2011 (4)

1.c4 g6
In rapid games I like to frighten myself and my opponents with the prospect of a Grünfeld Defence.
2.♘c3 c5
I first read about this position in a book by Petrosian, where he described how Fischer employed this cunning move order. Now White cannot transpose into the Maroczy Variation and the game takes a quiet course.
3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 ♘c6 5.a3



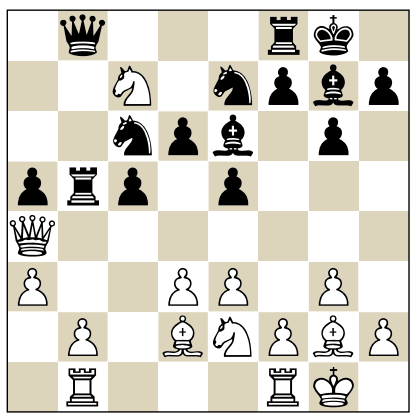
5...d6 Of course, 5...e6 is more correct, but during the game I forgot that if 6.b4 Black has a strong rejoinder in the form of 6...♘xb4.
6.♖b1 a5 7.e3 e5 8.♘ge2 ♘ge7 9.0-0 0-0 10.d3



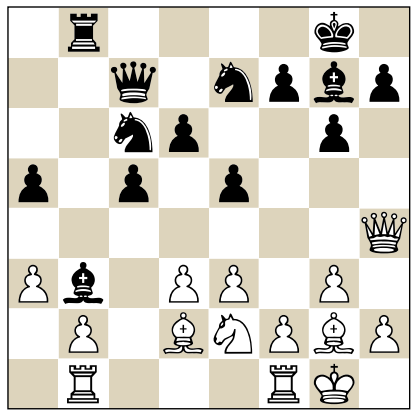
10...♖b8
Since if 10...♗e6 White has the standard reaction 11.♘d5, I decided to prepare an undermining of the centre.
11.♗d2 ♗e6 12.♘d5
Of course, Black must not be allowed to play ...d6-d5 free of charge.
12...b5
Of course, I saw that after 14.♕a4 my pieces were shakily placed, but I relied on my instinct, which told me that the plan with ...b7-b5 cannot be bad.
13.cxb5 13.♘ec3 was possible, leading to more tedious positions.
13...♖xb5 14.♕a4
If 14.♘ec3 Black simply retreats his rook to b8, with a decent position. The move in the game is more critical.

> 'In rapid games I like to frighten myself and my opponents with the prospect of a Grünfeld Defence.'

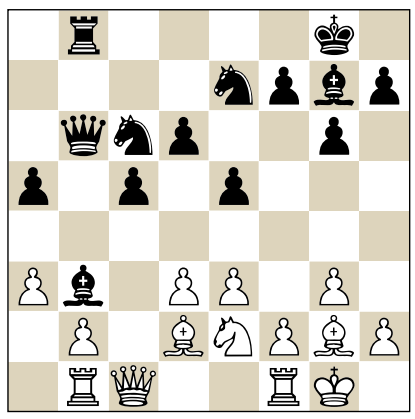
14...♕b8 15.♘c7



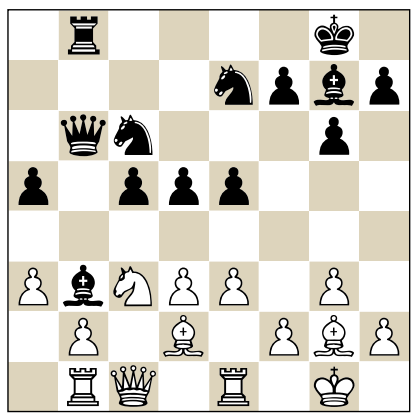
15...♕xc7
Typical play in a rapid game. Unable to assess quickly the consequences of 15...♖xb2 16.♘xe6 fxe6, I decided to begin a large-scale battle.
16.♕xb5 ♖b8 17.♕a4 ♗b3 18.♕h4



18...♗c2
Of course, the workman-like 18...d5 followed by the consolidating 19...♕d6 was stronger, but for some inexplicable reason I thought that the queen stood worse on c1 than on h4.
19.♕c4 ♗b3 20.♕c1 ♕b6
Preparing ...d6-d5 as well as a possible attack on the d3 pawn by ...♕a6.



21.♖e1 A solid move. Now White does not have to worry about the d3 pawn, since he has ♗f1.
21...d5
Thinking that in the event of quiet play I could run into the freeing move d3-d4, I decided to occupy the centre.
22.♘c3

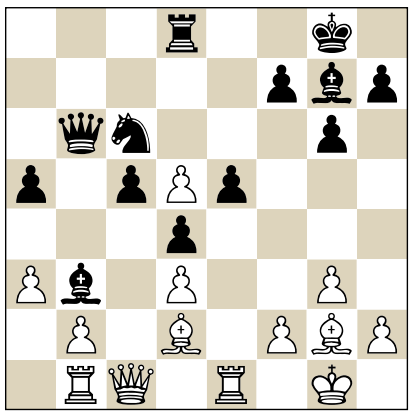


22...♖d8

From the aesthetic point of view I would have liked to play 22...e4 23. dxe4 ♘e5, but in reality after 24.♖e2 this is no good.

23.e4 Other moves are weak.

23...d4 24.♘d5 ♘xd5 25.exd5



25...♖xd5 There is nothing else, but in principle I like jolly play.

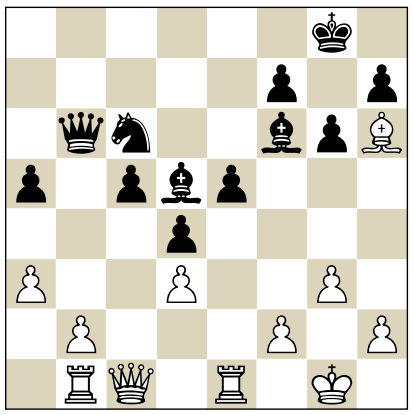
26.♗h6 ♗f6

I had an illusory hope of managing to play ...♗e7 and then ...f7-f6.

27.♗xd5

I was more afraid of the play without the giving up of this bishop.

27...♗xd5



28.♕d1 This move surprised me. I thought that White could not manage without f2-f4 and I was trying to find the correct set-up.

28...♗e7 Now Black has a clear plan.

29.h4

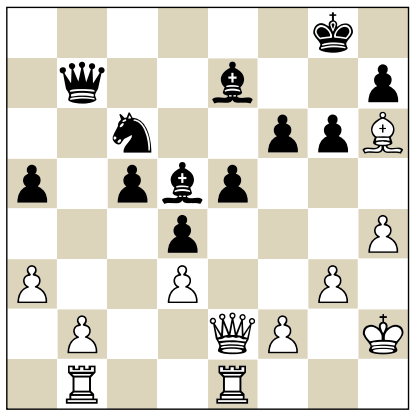
The next couple of moves surprised me; I thought that Magnus would think better of it and play f2-f4.

29...♕b7 30.♔h2 f6 31.♕e2

After this move the advantage passes to Black. Of course, f2-f4 is not as effective as it was earlier, but without this move Black acquires a monster on f3.

NEW IN CHESS

The art of expressing admiration. Commentator Evgeny Bareev drops to his knees and starts shining Levon Aronian's shoes after the Armenian's inspired win against Magnus Carlsen.



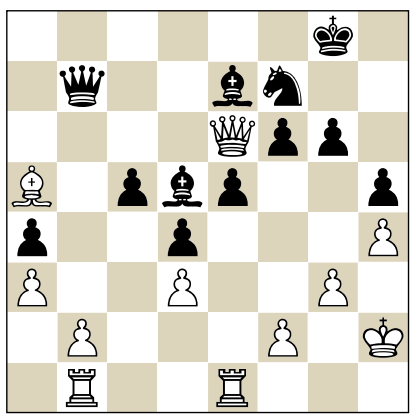
31...♘d8 32.♗d2 This mistake leaves the queen in a passive position at f1. Possibly White should have looked for chances with b2-b4.

32...♗f3 33.♕f1 a4 34.♕h3 h5

With the last few moves I have been able to set up a blockade.

35.♗a5 This attempt to gulp some air does not achieve anything.

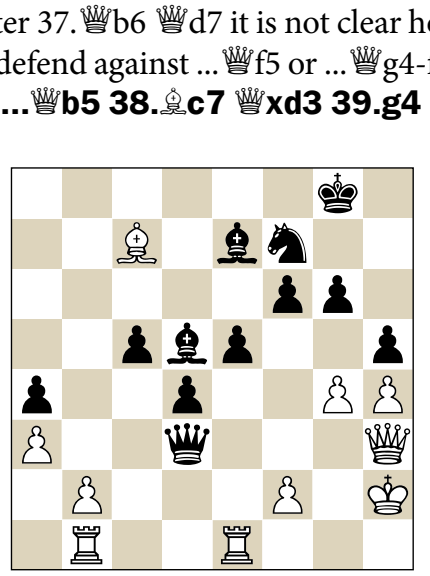
35...♘f7 36.♕e6 ♗d5



37.♕h3

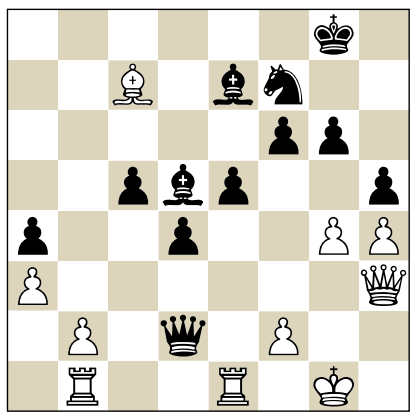
After 37.♕b6 ♕d7 it is not clear how to defend against ...♕f5 or ...♕g4-f3.

37...♕b5 38.♗c7 ♕xd3 39.g4



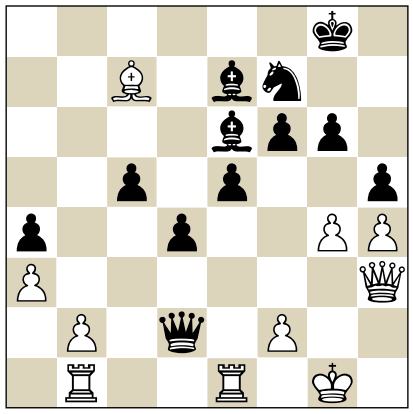
Now at least White's queen is in play.

39...♕d2 40.♔g1

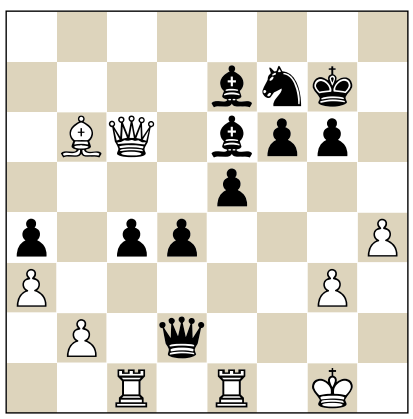


40...♗e6

40...hxg4 41.♕xg4 ♕h6 would have led to a mating attack, but at this point I began to show symptoms of pawn-grabbing.



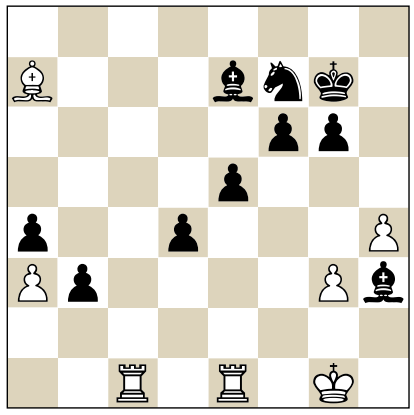
41.♕g2
After 41.♕h2 hxg4 42.f4 ♕xh2+ 43.♔xh2 ♗f5 the central pawns begin advancing.
41...hxg4 42.♖bc1 ♔g7 In winning positions there is no need to rush.
43.♗b6 c4
By activating the e7 bishop with 43... f5 I could have removed any intrigue from the game. With the following series of wonderful moves I began an operation to worsen my position.
44.♕c6 g3 45.fxg3



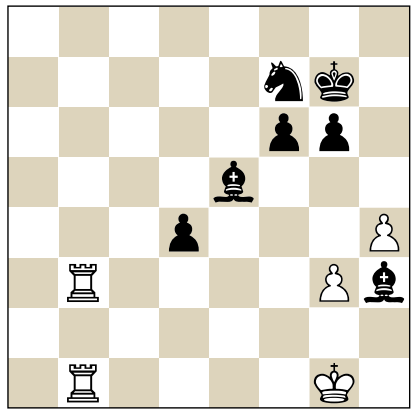
45...♗h3 My efforts to equalize the chances could have proved successful if Magnus had noticed the hanging position of the bishop on e7. After 46.♖cd1 ♕xb2 47.♗xd4 the worst for White would have been over.
46.♕f3 ♕xb2 47.♗a7 ♕b3
Not essential, but a possible measure.
48.♕xb3 cxb3

Magnus Carlsen didn't leave Moscow empty-handed. Before the first round he was presented with the 2010 Chess Oscar.

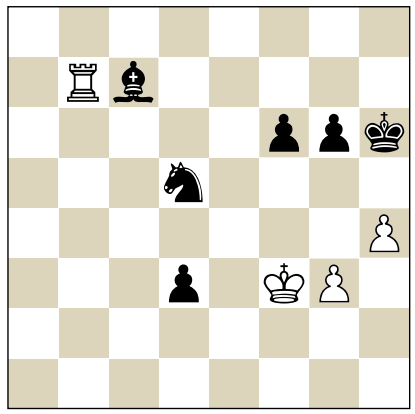
NEW IN CHESS



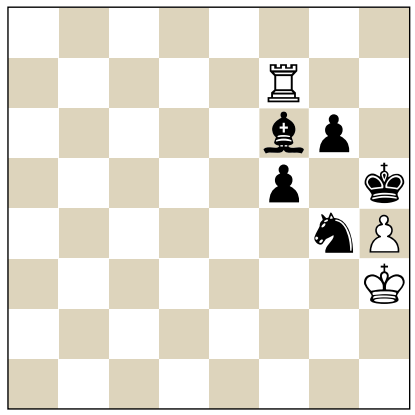
49.♗xd4 Too late.
49...♗xa3 50.♖a1 Knowing how I convert an advantage, my opponent decided to continue the resistance.
50...♗b4 51.♖eb1 exd4 52.♖xa4 ♗c5 53.♖a5 ♗b6 54.♖b5 ♗c7 55.♖5xb3 ♗e5 After avoiding losing anything, I caught my breath.



56.♔f2 ♘d6 57.♔f3 ♗e6 58.♖a3 ♗d5+ 59.♔e2 ♘b5 60.♖a5 ♘c3+ 61.♔f2 d3 62.♖xd5 ♘xd5 63. ♖b7+ ♗c7 64.♔f3 ♔h6



65.♖b3 I had forgotten about this, but with ...♘e7 ♖xd3 ...♘f5 in reserve I was not seriously embarrassed.
65...♗xg3 66.♖xd3 ♘f4 67.♖d8 ♘h5 68.♔g4 f5+ 69.♔h3 ♗e5 70.♖a8 ♗f6 71.♖a6 ♔g7 72. ♖a7+ ♔f8 73.♖b7 ♗e7 74.♖a7 ♔f7 75.♖a6 ♘f6 76.♔g3 ♘e4+ 77.♔h3 ♗c5 78.♖c6 ♗d6 79.♖a6 ♔g7 80.♖a8 ♗e5 81.♖a7+ ♔h6 82.♖b7 ♘f6 83.♖e7 ♘g4 84.♖a7 ♗f6 85.♖f7 ♔h5



Trusting that I would cope with the rest, Magnus resigned. ■

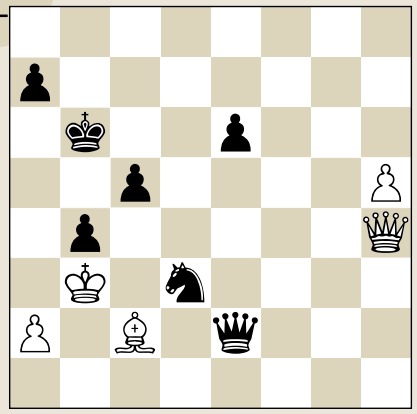
Moscow 2011 — **cat. XXIII**

					1	2	3	4		TPR
1	**Vishy Anand**	IGM	IND	2817	* *	½ ½	1 1	½ 1	4½	3000
2	**Vladimir Kramnik**	IGM	RUS	2791	½ ½	* *	½ 0	½ 1	3	2815
3	**Levon Aronian**	IGM	ARM	2807	0 0	½ 1	* *	½ 1	3	2810
4	**Magnus Carlsen**	IGM	NOR	2823	½ 0	½ 0	½ 0	* *	1½	2612

Forcing Moves

Solutions of page 39

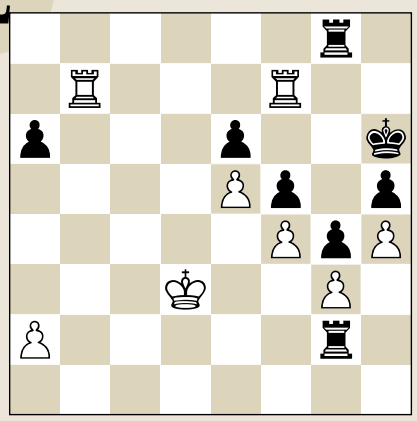
1



Von Popiel-Pillsbury
Budapest 1896

1...c4+! Rybka also likes 1...♔c6?!, but the text move is what humans call 'strictly correct': an accurately calculated forcing sequence snuffing out any random chance... **2.♕xc4 ♘c5+ 3.♔xb4 ♕d2+ 4.♔a3** 4.♕c3 a5+ 5.♔c4 ♕d5 mate. **4...♕c1+ 0-1** 5.♔b4 ♕b2+ wins the queen.

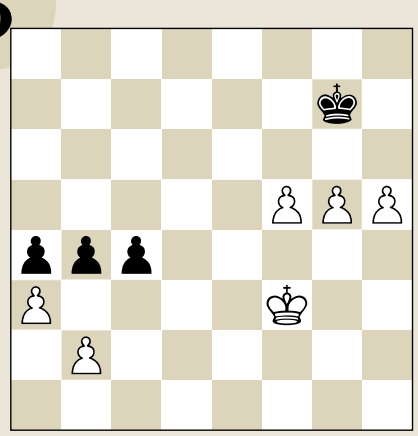
2



Gunsberg-Gossip
Breslau 1889

White won artfully with **1.♖be7!?** **♖xg3+ 2.♔d4 ♖f3** But much better is 2...♖a3!, with lots of fight left. **3.♖xe6+ ♖g6 4.♖e8! ♖xf4+ 5.♔c5 ♖g7 6.♖h8+ 1-0** Operator of the first 'chess-playing machine' Mephisto, the erratic but always entertaining Hungarian/British master might be amused to learn that today's 'automaton' Rybka finds a crisper way to implement his idea: **1.♖h7+! ♔g6 2.♖he7 ♖xg3+ 3.♔d4 ♔h6 4.♖xe6+ ♖g6 5. ♖ee7! ♖g8 6.♖h7+ ♔g6 7.♖hf7! ♔h6 8.♖b6+ ♖g6 9.♖b8! ♖c6 10.♖bb7** and mate.

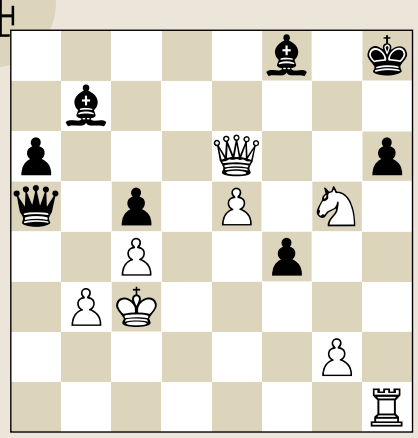
3



Minckwitz-Alapin
Breslau 1889

Stopping the pawns wins: **1.♔e3** Or 1.♔e2/e4. **1...c3 2.♔d3 cxb2 3.♔c2 bxa3 4.g6** Or 4.f6+ ♔f7 5.h6 ♔g6 6.♔b1! and Black is in zugzwang. Of course 1.axb4?? c3 loses. White did 'Fine' even without *Basic Chess Endings*.

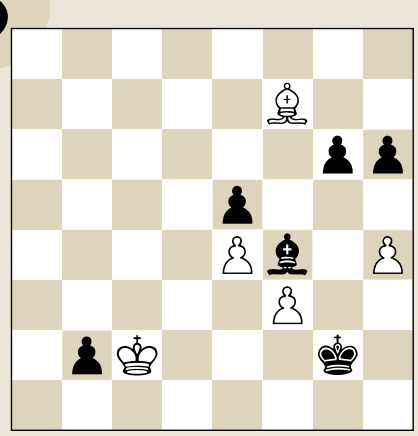
4



Mason-Gossip
Breslau 1889

Black's counterplay seems adequate, but the colourful Irish-American master found the sparkling winning idea **1.♔d3! ♕d8+ 2.♕d6!! ♕xd6+** On other queen moves 3. ♖xh6+! decides; or 2...♗xd6 3.♘f7+ ♔h7 4.♘xd8 ♗xg2 5.exd6 ♗xh1 6.d7. **3.exd6 ♗xg2 4.d7 ♗e7 5.♖xh6+ ♔g8** 5...♔g7 6.♖h7+. **6.♖g6+ 1-0**

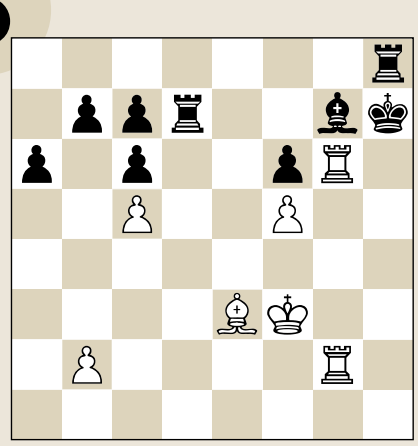
5



Schiffers-Blackburne
Breslau 1889

In opposite-coloured bishops endings, preventing a blockade is far more important to the attacker than material. 1...♔xf3?? 2.♗xg6 is dead drawn, so: **1...♔g3!** Also faulty is 1...g5? 2.hxg5 ♗xg5 3.♔xb2 ♔xf3 4.♔c2! ♔xe4 5.♔d1, with prospects of an h-pawn + wrong-coloured bishop draw. **2.♗xg6 ♔xh4 3.♔xb2 ♔g5! 4.♗f5 h5 5.♔c2 ♗e3! 6.♔d3 ♔f4 7.♔e2 ♗d4** Boxing out the enemy king, with an easy win: **8.♗e6 ♔g3 9.♗f5 h4 10.f4 exf4 11.e5 f3+ 12.♔f1 h3 13.♗xh3 ♔xh3 14.e6 ♗c5 0-1**

6



MacKenzie-Gifford
Paris 1878

The swashbuckling Scotsman lost the structural battle but won the war: **1.♗h6! ♗xh6** 1...♖g8 2.♖h2. **2.♖h2 ♖d3+ 3.♔e4 ♖e3+ 4.♔d4 1-0** Black could play for tricks: 4...♖d8+ 5.♔c4 ♖e4+ (5...b5+ 6.cxb6□+–) 6.♔c3 ♖e3+ 7.♔c2 ♖d2+!? 8.♖xd2 ♖h3, avoiding mate, but little else.

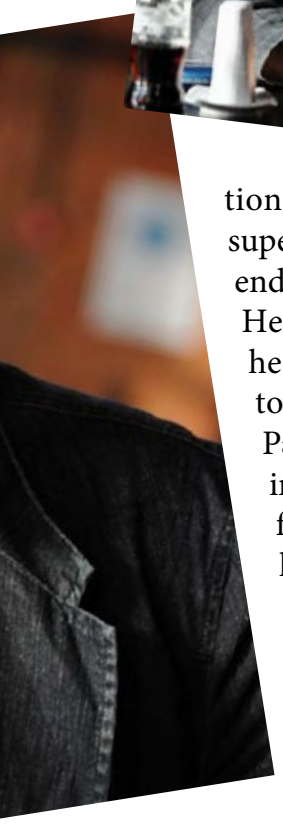
Why Chess

Why or why not?

With the launch of their website, provocatively named WhyChess, Vlad Tkachiev and his brother Evgeny saw an old dream come true. Finally the 'Blitz Brothers' have a platform to trumpet their message, which (briefly summarized) says that rapid and blitz are the nec plus ultra of our game and that chess players, as the French GM emphasizes once again in a lively talk in Moscow, do have sex. For the moment, Tkachiev doesn't want to reveal the investor(s) backing the project, but given his preferences it is too tempting not to speculate on who supports their activities financially.

PHOTOS NEW IN CHESS

In the middle of our conversation, Vlad Tkachiev suddenly changes the subject and returns to the time when he was still living in Kazakhstan and decided to become a chess player. 'I am a product of Soviet chess. Why did I do this?' He briefly pauses and then provides the answer: 'Because, if I became a strong player, I would belong to the elite, with Karpov and Kasparov. And doors would be opened.' In his early years this prospect still seemed to be a possibility, chess as a launching pad for a social career, until the collapse of the Soviet Union brought a new reality. Still, the disintegration of the chess superpower didn't put a definite end to his hopes and ambitions. He waxes enthusiastic when he remembers the PCA rapid tournaments in London and Paris, when chess was played in packed theatres and hit the front pages. That was the way he wanted to see chess, as a show for a broad audience with the players as stars.



We're sitting in the restaurant of the Centre for New Technologies Digital October, the venue of the Botvinnik Memorial. These days Tkachiev divides his time between France, where he moved in the mid-90s, and Moscow, where his new enterprise is based. With fervour he talks about his wish to breathe new life into the game with the WhyChess website. 'It was an old idea of me and my brother's. We always wanted to create a new image of chess. In a new, lively and young style.' But as he sips his coffee and regularly lights a new cigarette he gets almost angry when he describes the way he sees chess today. 'I am completely, totally dissatisfied with the situation in chess.' He repeats that he has been unhappy since the end of the PCA. 'That's when we had to do it. Let me give you two examples: the World Championship tournaments Groningen 1997 and Las Vegas 1999. There were millions of dollars of prizemoney and nobody knew that these tournaments were taking place! I'd definitely like to see chess on TV. We have a poll on chess and TV ideas and will search for an investor for the best idea. My own idea is 25-25 plus 5 minutes of commercials.'

Getting chess on TV is only one of many ideas he wants to push on WhyChess. 'We should have more exhibition tournaments like what we see here, that would be a step in the right direction. And there should be more human interest. What we call in France 'les faits divers'. We have to convince others that we are normal people. Yes, we have sex and yes, we have nice boys and girls. We know nothing of the private lives of chess players. When there are no tournaments, there is nothing to write about. Too many topics have never existed in chess. When there are no matches, soccer journalists write about Ronaldo's girlfriend.'

Tkachiev, who has never objected to his image of a womanizer, wouldn't mind having articles about chess players' girlfriends or about the girls and women who are playing chess themselves. He would love to revive the World Chess Beauty Contest that evoked both enthusiasm and disgust when he and his brother started it in 2005. It caused controversy, but it also resulted in a feature in the New York Times ('Mixing Sex Appeal and Chess. Is She a Queen or a Pawn?'). Now he says: 'When we started the Beauty Contest, chess amateurs were shocked by a girl in bikini. These same amateurs don't blink an eye when they walk on the Croisette in Cannes and see a topless girl. One of the main obstacles in the development of the chess industry is that we lack the human side.'

As if to compensate for this lack, Tkachiev himself has managed to make headlines by showing his human side on various occasions, e.g. when the aftereffects of drink caused him to fall asleep at the board in an open tournament in Calcutta in 2009. Or when for similar reasons he didn't appear for the last round at the Dresden Olympiad one year earlier, which led to a zero without a move being made for his team. On the other hand, in the chess press he also managed to attract attention in a more positive manner. Perhaps his biggest achievement was his win at the European

Championship in that same city of Dresden in 2007. Of course, as a true speedster he only claimed the title in a rapid play-off in which he shook off Sutovsky, Yakovenko and Cheparinov.

The appearance of the WhyChess website seems to coincide with FIDE's emphasis on quicker time rates as part of their ideas to 'modernize' chess. According to Tkachiev, this is pure coincidence. He has a point when he stresses that speed chess has been his obsession for the past few decades. Didn't he win the Moscow blitz championship in 2004 ahead of Rublevsky, Morozevich and Grischuk? And didn't he and his brother

organize the first and only two-minute Blitz 'World Championship' in Kazakhstan in 1995, with the participation of Karpov and Judit Polgar? The final (which he lost) against Karpov remains one of his best memories, with a thousand spectators watching breathlessly as they blitzed out their moves.

That excitement he would like to create again with WhyChess. On their site he has fulfilled his wish to have a sex columnist, but we would say that as long as Oksana Rumyantseva's theories don't become more accessible, the main attractions for the moment are the live transmissions of the main tournaments (assessed by Houdini, whose comments can be turned off by people who choose to think themselves) and the extensive interviews conducted by Tkachiev himself and beautifully illustrated with dynamic photographs. 'We have lots of ideas, many of which have not yet been realized. I am proud of the transmissions. I know that the professionals watch the games on our site.' The site also presents educational videos for various levels, but despite the fact that they are for free ('our principle is that education should be free') they attract hardly any visitors. Tkachiev expects more from the gaming zone, which was opened at the end of September.

But what he really expects from the website is not all that clear. Unlike prominent news sites like ChessBase, The Week in Chess and ChessVibes, which are barely disguised 'shops' for the products they sell, WhyChess seems to try and make do without a business model. Offering everything for free without having any income indeed sounds reminiscent of the websites that popped up before the burst of the first Internet bubble wiped them away. According to a well-informed source, the money for the site comes from an advisor to FIDE president Kirsan Ilyumzhinov. Tkachiev limits himself to saying: 'We have an investor who is based in Moscow. This is what we had been searching for for years. Unfortunately I cannot say more. He is not directly linked to FIDE. He loves chess and is not in competition with FIDE, that's all I can say.'

We'll see. In any case it's clear that in its early months WhyChess have been sailing a course that is not alien to the new plans of FIDE. The first interview was with Kirsan Ilyumzhinov himself, who revealed an interesting side of his recent state of mind when he famously explained: 'To tell the truth, as FIDE President I'm sick and tired of gathering money for champions. There are a lot of examples when we tried to find money and they didn't do anything, but then, after getting this money, they started carping both on me and FIDE. Therefore, they'll get what they earn.' And second in line was probably the biggest advocate of the quicker time-controls, Alexander Grischuk, who not only defended his position regarding rapid and blitz, but also raised a few eyebrows when he stated that 'I'm currently more inclined to evaluate Stalin positively.' And why, one may wonder, was Tkachiev invited as a journalist to accompany Ilyumzhinov when he went to visit former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev to get his support for his school chess project?

As said, Tkachiev denies the link with FIDE and reiterates that he wants to make chess trendier and more appealing for a new generation. 'We have to reconsider our position in a new society where there are iPhones, iPads and the Internet. What shall we do? Adapt or become like bridge? A game for rich or old people who play tournaments at sunny locations. That's my worst nightmare.'

How Tkachiev intends to make his plans profitable only time can tell – when we will find out more about his investor. Is he only a wealthy man who loves chess without being interested in revenues, a phenomenon known from other Russian websites? Or does he have an agenda and is that the main question that WhyChess poses. (DJtG) ■

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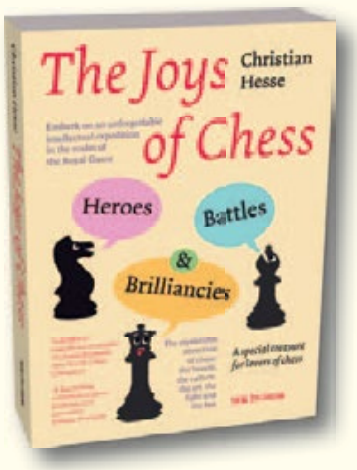

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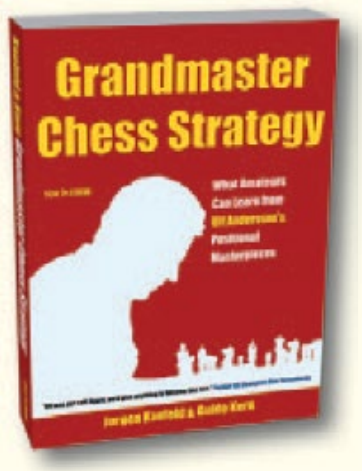
Hans Ree



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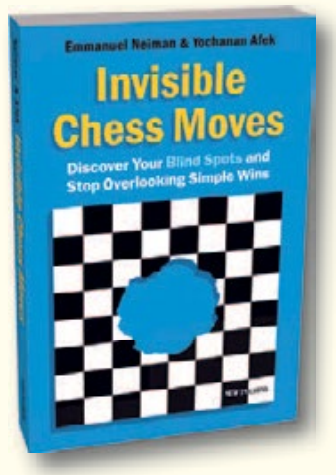

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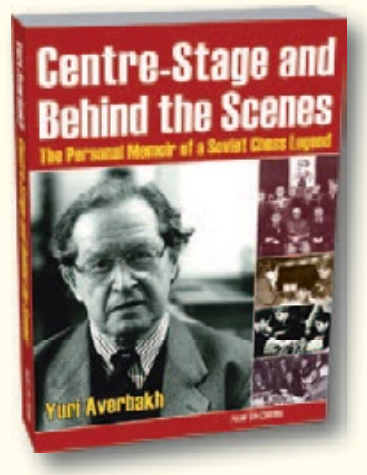

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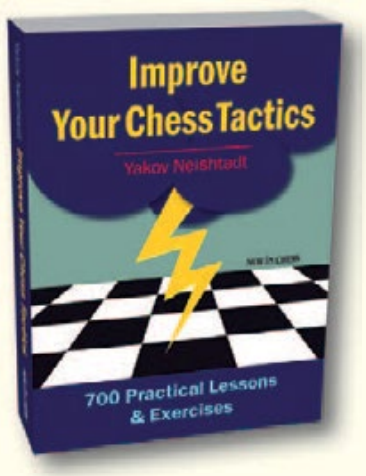

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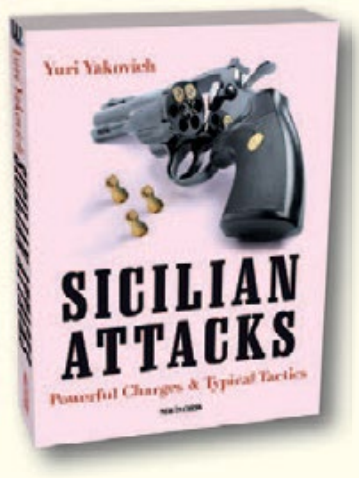

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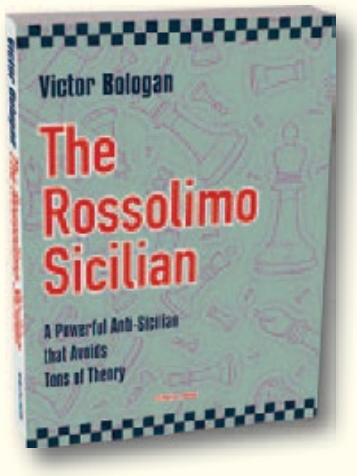

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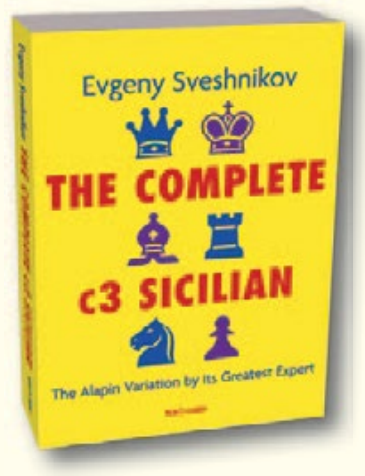

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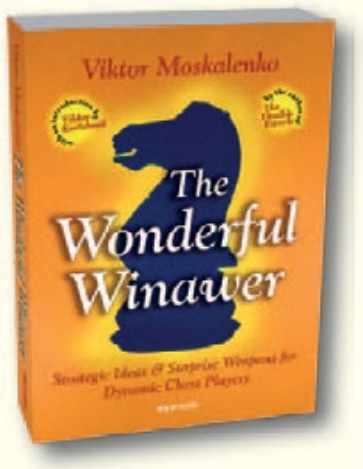

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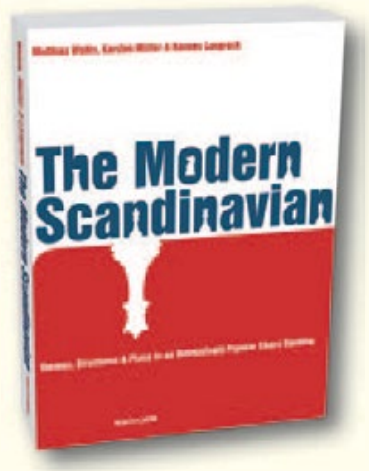

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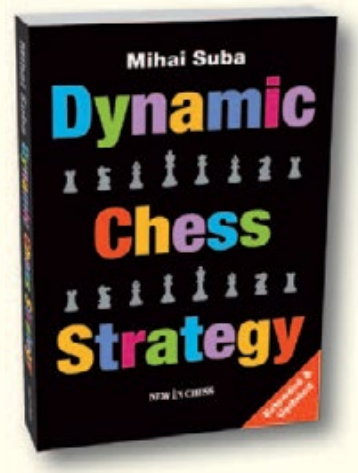

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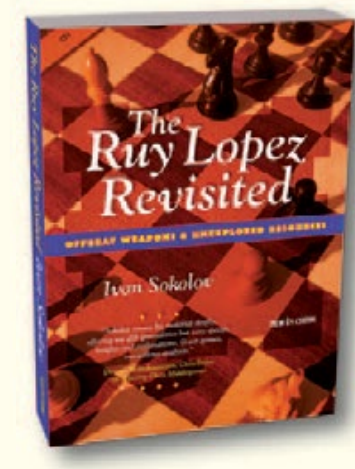

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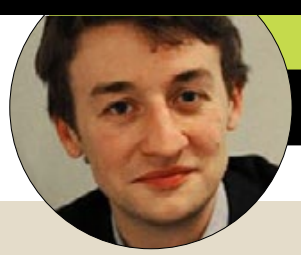


Luke McShane

Learning the hard way

Chess is a game sufficiently rich in meaning, that it is easily capable of containing elements of both tragedy and comedy. Over the years these classic concepts have been given many interpretations, but at least in the modern sense it seems to me that it is rather rare to experience both aspects simultaneously, particularly in one's own games.

In fact, deciding which chess episodes are tragic or comic is rather a personal matter. To consider a chess game tragic is, perhaps, to take it a little too seriously, while to consider it comic typically calls for either a vivid imagination or a little sprinkling of Schadenfreude. Perhaps an unlikely pawn turns into a game's hero, but it's much more common to be entertained by someone else's calamities.

Some of my favourite examples are to be found on Tim Krabbé's fascinating webpage of chess curiosities, in the section titled 'The Ultimate Blunder'. 'The Ultimate Blunder' is when a player resigns in a winning position – a rare form of chess slapstick that tickles me every time. If it ever happens to me, now *that* would be a tragedy.

I must confess that I have, on occasion, finished a game of chess (typically a scrappy game that ends in a draw) and declared with a grin that it was an awful game of chess. Such games have a hint of tragicomedy about them, particularly where the result of the game was important. But they are few and far between. For me, it's normally one or the other.

Mark Dvoretsky's new book *Tragicomedy in the Endgame* is a collection of 'Instructive Mistakes of the Masters', which is intended as a sort of complementary work to *Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual* (DEM). Dvoretsky explains that these episodes are tragicomedies because they are 'sad for the chess players themselves, and amusing for the spectators'. Indeed, there are even a couple of examples of 'The Ultimate Blunder'.

But as I looked through countless numbers of strong players making mistakes in apparently simple positions, the overwhelming feeling was of compassion, knowing that I probably wouldn't have fared much better. That, mixed with a little bit of awe at the complexity of chess. Of course, the renowned trainer is not just pointing fun – the serious message is that a careful study of these incidents is beneficial. Dvoretsky has this to say:

'For those who are not familiar with DEM, *the present volume will serve as an introduction to the fascinating world of endgames and, possibly, prompt them to take up the systematic study of endgame theory. I am firmly convinced – contrary to popular opinion – that such an undertaking is much more effective than endless reworking and memorization of opening material. And, as a result, there will be a significant increase in rating and improved tournament results.'*

Deep down, I know this is true, although a little healthy scepticism is called for. About twenty pages at the beginning of the book are devoted to endgames with ♖+♙ v ♖. As anyone who has ever looked at a tablebase will know, the nuances are extremely hard to fathom. The silver lining is that the tricky cases are really pretty rare. I had a look through my own games, and there were very few examples of ♖+♙ v ♖ where the correct result wasn't trivially obvious. So is it worth studying at all? Probably yes, but one also has to be realistic – only a very few half points in one's chess 'lifetime' will turn on those details. Furthermore, even a minutely careful study of such endgames does not guarantee that one will make the correct moves. Dvoretsky is well aware of this, and emphasizes that rote learning alone will not do – he also gets the students at his sessions to practice playing out these types of positions. Still, it takes a very long time for these skills to become second nature. Once upon a time, I remember defending the ending of ♖+♗ v ♖. In fact, it was something I had already done in an earlier game, but I still managed to screw it up, reaching a position which I knew was lost. But I couldn't figure out why my position was lost (despite knowing that I had once studied it) and thankfully nor could my opponent, so we eventually drew the game. My knowledge was certainly of some help, but exactly how much is hard to judge. It might be an illusion, but an arsenal of crushing novelties can seem so much more tangible.

For me, the most useful feature of Dvoretsky's book is that throughout the book (and in other books, I believe) he places the really crucial judgments in bold type. To know for ex-

ample that, in endings of queen and pawn against queen, 'Almost all positions with bishop or central pawns are won' is much more helpful than twenty pages of analysis.

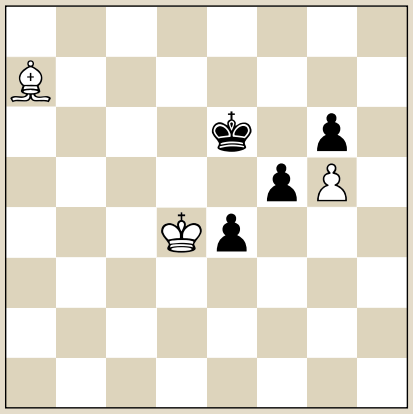
Even if one's memory can't cope with all the details, endgame knowledge is often helpful in more subtle ways. Dvoretsky tells a story from many years ago:

'...Silvio Danailov, Topalov's manager, complained to me that his client loses many points in endings as he does not feel very confident in this phase of the game and even declines to go in for favourable exchanges so that he may avoid transposing into an endgame.'

So Topalov attended an intensive training session in Moscow, and his results soon showed a marked improvement.

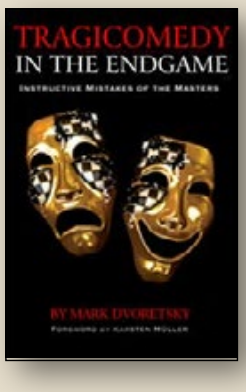
In my own experience, the main benefits are often realised even when the endgames you have studied never make it onto the board. Endgames often arise in variations, and it's important to develop a good 'feel' for which ones are likely to pose practical problems for the opponent. Likewise, the confidence to simplify into an inferior but tenable endgame, safe in the knowledge that you know how to hold it, is invaluable.

In fact, this book contains a mixture of both 'simple' endgames (in the realm of tablebases), and more complicated ones. Here is a fairly 'simple' position which I found particularly surprising (this and the following one contain just slightly abridged comments from Dvoretsky).



Tunik-Daniliuk
St. Petersburg 1993

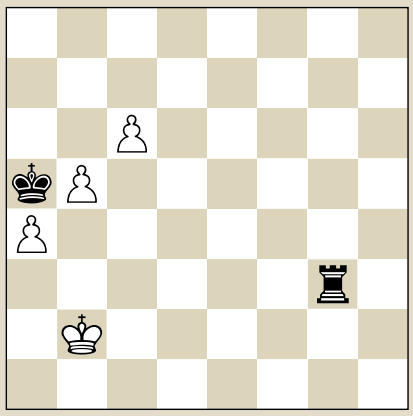
62...e3!? 63.♔xe3? Controlling d5 is more important than the black pawn! 63.♗c5 e2 64.♗b4 would have won. For example, 64...f4 65.♔e4 f3 66.♗e1! (but not 66.♔xf3?? ♔f5 67.♗d2 e1♕=), Zugzwang, or 64...♔d7 65.♔e5 ♔c6 66.♔f6 ♔d5 67.♔xg6 ♔e4 68.♔h5! f4 69.♔g4 f3 70.♗e1 ♔e3 71.♔g3+–. **63...♔d5** A position well known to endgame theory as drawn has arisen. However, in practice, it is seen rather rarely and therefore virtually no chess players are familiar with it. The black king successfully stands its ground, making the run to the queenside difficult. **64.♗b8 ♔c4 65.♗e5 ♔d5** Dvoretsky supplies a few more variations but I will restrict myself to the final moves here. **66.♗b2**



Tragicomedy in the Endgame
Mark Dvoretsky
Russell Enterprises
2011

♔c4 67.♗d4 ♔d5 68.♔d3 ♔e6 69.♔c4 f4! 70.♗f6 ♔f5 71.♔d3 ♔g4 72.♔e2 ♔g3 73.♔f1 ♔f3 74.♗d8 ♔g3 75.♔g1 f3 76.♗a5 f2+ 77.♔f1 ♔f3 78.♗b6 ♔f4 79.♗d8 ♔f3 80.♗a5 ♔f4 Draw.

And then I was a bit surprised to find this position:



Crouch-McShane
England 1998/99

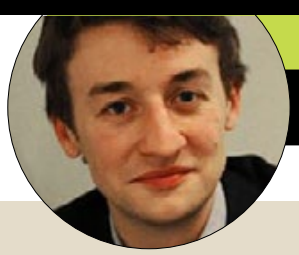
76.♔c2? After 76.♔a2 Black has no way to make any progress: 76...♔b4 77.c7 ♖a3+ 78.♔b2 ♖b3+ 79.♔a2= or 76...♖c3 77.♔b2 ♔b4 78.a5!=. **76...♖g4?** Returning the compliment. 76...♔b4! won, since White does not have 77.c7, because of 77...♖c3+. And on 77.♔d2, 77...♖g8! decides matters (78...♔xa4 is threatened) 78.♔d3 (78.c7 ♔c5) 78...♔xa4 79.♔c4 ♔a5 80.♔c5 ♖g5+. **77.♔b3 ♖b4+ 78.♔c3 ♖b1 79.♔c2 ♖f1 80.♔b3?** The rook should not have been allowed behind the pawns. On 80.♔b2! the game would have concluded peacefully (of course, assuming no more errors by the players). **80...♖a1 81.♔c4 ♖xa4+ 82.♔c5 ♖a1 83.c7 ♖c1+ 84.♔d6 ♔b6** 0-1.

I do actually remember this game, but the only things which stuck in my mind were that the original position was drawn, and that I managed to win in spite of that. Perhaps it would have been a good idea, all those years ago, to have read one of the chapters of Vassilios Kotronias' new book, *The Grandmaster Battle Manual*. His third chapter is entitled 'Be a harsh critic of your own wins'.

Kotronias writes in his preface that 'I considered using the title "How to Win Open Tournaments". This book is indeed based on my extensive tournament experience and I hope that it will help chess players to be more successful. However, I want to write about more than *just* winning. I want to encourage chess players to fight hard, enjoy the struggle, and then win!'

The book consists of a large number of games, mostly analysed in considerable detail. Kotronias' style is sharp and uncompromising, but he does not stint on self-criticism, so this is by no means a 'best games collection'.

Plenty of examples are also taken from the games of other top players. Like Dvoretsky's book, *The Grandmaster Battle Manual* is aimed at strong players who are keen to become stronger, and Kotronias shares a great number of insights from his own career.



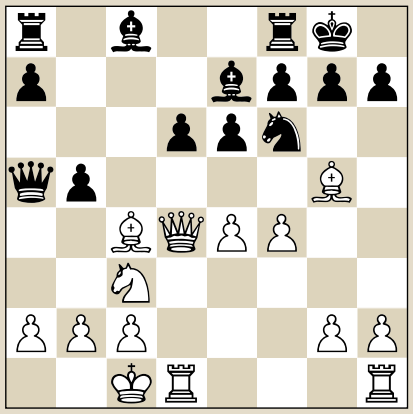
Through the Luking Glass

Many of these duels are accompanied by some pretty deep analysis. Although the variations contain plenty of excitement, very occasionally I felt a bit lost in the jungle. I would expect some strong players to disagree with me, but when analysing my own games and assessing the quality of the play, I prefer to draw conclusions based only on those variations which one would have had a realistic chance of seeing over the board. (There are just a few exceptions to this, such as when one wishes to see well how one's intuition matches up with chess 'truth'.)

That said, nearly all of these annotations are a pleasure to read, particularly as there is a keen eye for aesthetics throughout the book. But for me, the real gems were the small nuggets of experience which crop up here and there. Considering a risky but objectively superior pawn grab in the Berlin Defence, Kotronias suggests that 'Black players are reluctant to enter sharp complications once they arise, presumably because in adopting such structures they committed themselves in advance to avoiding any risks; a practical attitude introduced by the great Petrosian.' A few pages later the point is reinforced: '18...♖g8! This move is typical of wally structure devotees! They will play it in a flash, avoiding "unnecessary" calculations and gaining time on the clock.' To anticipate such details in the heat of battle, and perhaps to adjust your own thinking time accordingly, is no easy task but can make a subtle, meaningful difference to your practical results.

Above all, *The Grandmaster Battle Manual* is packed with Kotronias' personal experience, discussed with refreshing honesty. Amongst many subjects, he shares ideas on how to deal with setbacks, the best way to handle weaker opposition, and how to cope with a crucial last-round game. These topics are considered in some detail, with a sort of short essay at the beginning of their respective chapters, and the games are chosen to illustrate those themes (and of course, for their own value).

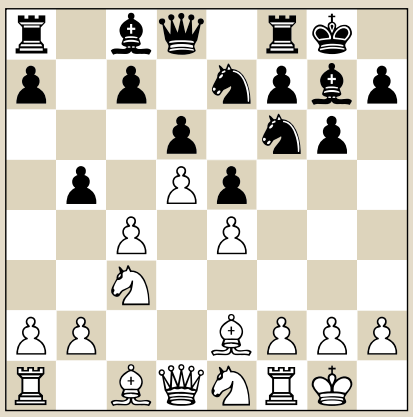
This example struck a chord with me. In a Rauzer Sicilian, the position is reached after the move **11...b7-b5?!**



Kasimdzhanov-Kotronias
Germany Bundesliga 2007

Kotronias' sober opinion is now that: 'This move, even if it stands up to analytical scrutiny, cannot be recommended.'

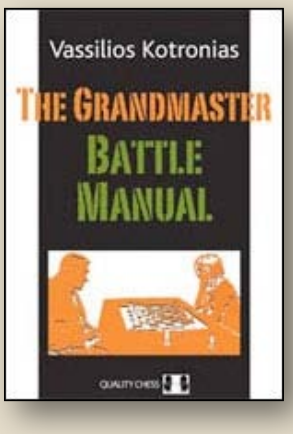
It seems he analysed this in enormous depth at home, hoping to catch White out in the complications which ensue. Unfortunately, White has many decent ways to continue after 12.♗xb5 ♖b8. Aside from the objective merits of the sacrifice, memorizing all these lines was a huge practical burden and the experiment ended in disaster. I hope the comparison won't seem rude, but I was reminded of an idea which I had in the King's Indian (in fairness, I think I was about 12 years old): **1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘e1 b5??**



Naturally, White will capture with the c-pawn, as the ♘c3 needs to defend the pawn on e4. At the time, I saw the King's Indian as an elaborate sort of race, where Black tries to give mate on the kingside, while White attempts to hammer through the queenside. In my naivety, the only tools I knew for that purpose were to play c4-c5 and ♘b5 in some combination. After cxb5, neither of those plans is available to White, who would therefore just lie in wait for his execution on the kingside. I even had the opportunity to suggest this move while analysing with David Bronstein. It's probably a sign of great wisdom that he didn't try to dissuade me from trying this out...

Since then, I've had better ideas which were still bad, and just like Kotronias, gone to implausible lengths to try to make them playable. Many of the lessons in this book I also learnt the hard way!

Apart from colourful chess, self-criticism is a thread which runs consistently throughout. Crucial as that is, I sometimes wonder if chess players spend far too much time beating themselves up, trying to draw conclusions from even the slightest error. In suggesting how to cope with the self-flagellation that can follow a bad loss, Kotronias has a philosophical suggestion which struck me as really neat, in a sort of Socratic way.



The Grandmaster Battle Manual
Vassilios Kotronias
Quality Chess 2011

'My answer is to avoid perfectionism. If you are a perfectionist, you will never approach really high levels. Also, you will never be objective, because objectivity has to do with reality and not with an ideal state. So, when you or others tell you that you are a great player say: "No I'm not!" [So far so modest, but here's the kicker:] That way, you will be able to give the same answer even when others, but especially yourself, tell you that you are a bad player.' ■

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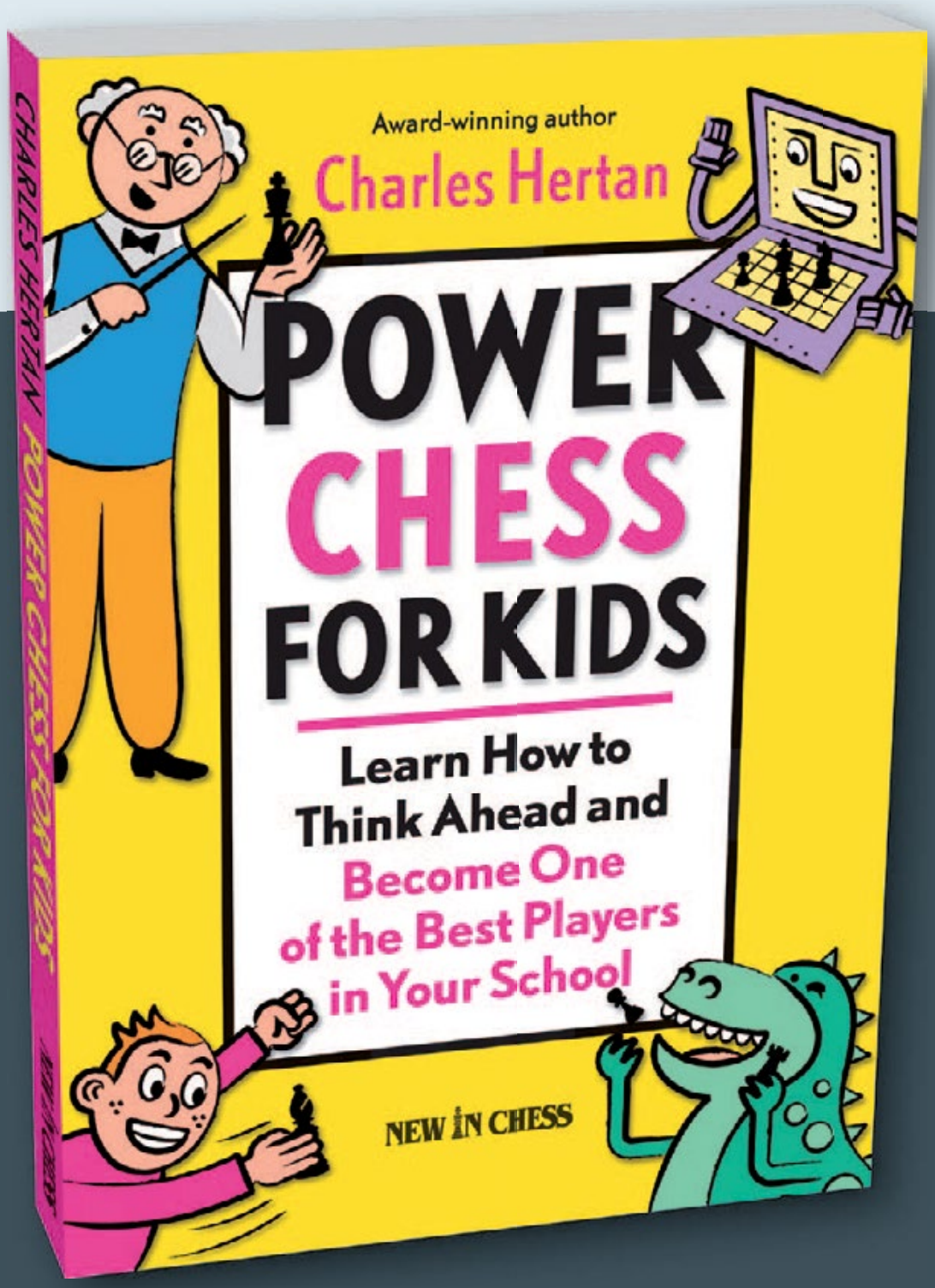
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A NEW IN CHESS PUBLICATION

Hans Ree

Looking and Roaring like a Lion

This year the English antiquarian and genealogist John Townsend published his *Notes on the Life of Howard Staunton* in a small edition of one hundred copies. Despite Townsend's extensive research, the mystery that shrouds Staunton's early life was not resolved.

120 Years after his death Staunton was still presented as a chess villain to the general public.

He didn't have a good press. Howard Staunton (1810-1874) was not afraid to make enemies and what he gave to the world in insults, the world gave back. Many of his contemporaries resented his haughty manners and heavy pontificating on the sins of everyone who he perceived to have come between him and the sun.

Later there was the Morphy affair in 1858, when Staunton had already practically retired from chess. Staunton had never committed himself to playing a match against Paul Morphy, and he had good and honourable reasons to refuse the challenge, but for many writers on chess history he has remained the spoilsport who ducked a match that Morphy supposedly was entitled to.

And then there was his playing style. Of course he was able to make combinations in open positions, but others could do that too. The kind of play in which he was ahead of his time, slow manoeuvring in closed positions, was often considered just boring.

In the book *Howard Staunton – the English world chess champion*, by R.D. Keene and R.N. Coles, the authors quote Reuben Fine, who 'in one of his books' (why not say which one?) had apparently written: 'Because of his style Staunton's play is not very impressive to our eyes.' The Staunton game that Fine deigned to include in his book he called with damning faint praise 'the best game of his I have been able to find.'

Chess villain

Chess-playing villains abound in films, but it is certainly exceptional when a feature film casts a chess champion from real life as the villain under his real name. As far as I know, this honour befell only Howard Staunton, in a film from 1994 which I have mentioned here before. It was a Belgian/French/Swiss production, *La partie d'échecs*. In that film, set in 1842, when the real Howard Staunton was near the height of his powers, the haughty and condescending English World Champion 'Lord Staunton' tried to win both the world championship match and the ravishing daughter of a French duchess by committing the ultimate chess sin: promising to lose a pre-arranged game and then winning it. A hundred-and-twenty years after his death Staunton was still presented to the general public as a chess villain.

Fischer's list

Besides many detractors, Staunton's great extoller was, of course, Bobby Fischer, who in 1964, in the American magazine *Chessworld* , included him in his list of the 10 best players of all time. That list was criticized by many. How could Tarrasch be on it and not Lasker, who had soundly beaten Tarrasch in a world championship match? Lasker was casually dismissed by Fischer as a coffeehouse player who didn't know openings and didn't understand positional play.

The Dutch GM Hein Donner found another grave omission and wrote in the Dutch weekly *Elsevier's Weekblad*: 'He probably has not overlooked me at all. No, he has omitted me on purpose. What is more, I have the distinct impression that he has only given his views in order not to mention me! I don't understand why Elsevier's, a quality magazine after all, decided to publish this article. To list such dunces as Chigorin and Steinitz but to omit me – how dare he, the little brat.'

Whatever the defects of Fischer's list, it was obvious that he had not followed

the accepted views, but had formed an independent opinion, based on solid knowledge. About Staunton he wrote: 'Staunton was the most profound opening analyst of all time. He was more theorist than player but none the less he was the strongest player of his day. Playing over his games I discovered that they are completely modern. Where Morphy and Steinitz rejected the fianchetto, Staunton embraced it. In addition, he understood all those positional concepts which modern players hold so dear, and thus with Steinitz he must be considered the first modern player.'

When Fischer's list was published, I realized that I knew at least a few games of all the great players on that list, except for Staunton. And even later, when I did play over Staunton games, they didn't stick in my mind. Fianchettoes and blockades, that I did remember, but when I started preparing this article, I couldn't really describe one individual game by Staunton. How unjust!

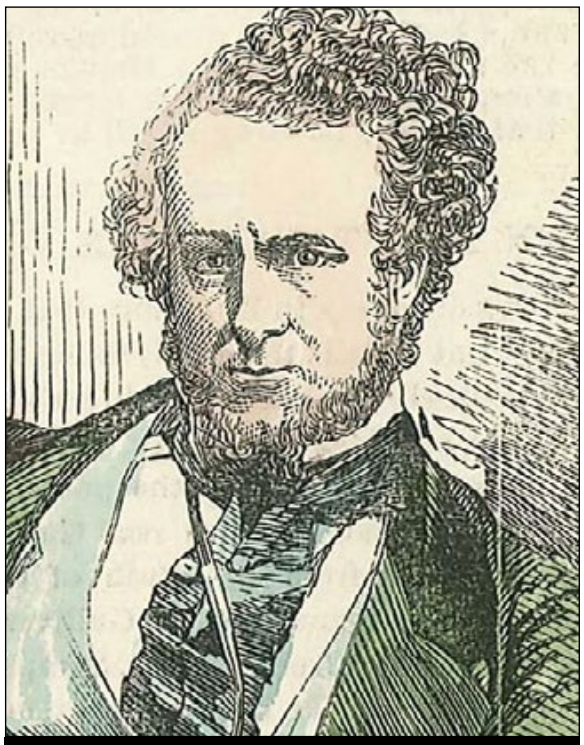
A Victorian chess groupie

Staunton's chess career, which started late in his life, and his later career as a Shakespearean scholar are of course well documented. His name appeared for the first time in the chess world in 1836 as a subscriber to a book on the games played by Alexander McDonnell. At the time, a book was often printed only when enough people had pledged to buy it. Publishing on demand would be the modern term.

According to his own assessment, Staunton, 26 years old, had the strength of a rook player at that time, someone who would receive the odds of a rook from a first-class player. He improved quickly, became an important chess writer and in 1843 played a short match in London against the leading French player Saint-Amant that the Frenchman won with the score of +3 =1 –2.

Later that year they played a much longer match at the Café de la Régence in Paris, won by Staunton (+11 =4 –6). The match evoked great interest in all circles of refined society. Townsend mentions a letter by a lady to *Galgani's Messenger*, an English newspaper based in Paris. It was 'written in small characters on perfumed paper bearing a seal in the form of a dove, expressing her desire to improve her game with the help of a patient teacher, and enquiring whether the two champions were young and yet to marry.'

Afterwards supporters of both sides exchanged blows in a battle to settle the question of whether all conditions had been fair and which of the two players had been at an advantage. The match was seen as a victory of English chess over France and was very influential,



Howard Staunton (1810?-1874)

not only among ladies seeking a husband. Henceforth London was seen as the centre of the chess world, and European masters tended to gravitate not to Paris, as they had done in the past, but to London.

In 1844 Staunton came to Paris for a third match against Saint-Amant, but just before it was to start Staunton fell ill. Illness is often taken as a bad excuse, but this seems to have been serious, as Staunton had to stay three months on his Paris sickbed. Nothing came of that third match.

Staunton played and won some more matches, took up a highly influential weekly column in *The Illustrated London News*, wrote books and gave his name to the pieces that we all play with nowadays.

In 1851 he organized the world's first international chess tournament, won by Anderssen. Staunton's fourth place was a great disappointment.

During the 1850's he took up a second career as an annotator of Shakespeare's plays. When Morphy came to England in 1858 to defeat all comers, Staunton was already out of practice and under a strict contract to publish his annotated Shakespeare in monthly instalments.

Though subsequently he wrote several chess books and kept his weekly column till the end of his life, literary scholarship had become his main interest and main source of income.

Who was he really?

The preceding brief account of Staunton's life starts when he was 26 years old. From two books published in 1975 (*Howard Staunton* by D.N.L. Levy and the book by Keene and Coles) I knew that not much was known about his earlier life. Hooper and Whyld's *Oxford Companion to Chess* from 1992 didn't help either. Like others, they mention that the rumour that he was an illegitimate son of the fifth Earl of Carlisle, never contradicted by Staunton, was baseless and that in all probability Howard Staunton was not his real name.

The full extent of our ignorance became clear to me after reading John Townsend's *Notes on the life of Howard Staunton*. Townsend is an antiquarian bookseller and a professional genealogist with wide experience of genealogical and biographical research. His book does not pretend to be a full biography of Staunton, but is what the title says: notes. But very detailed notes, based on extensive research.

For the last 10 years Townsend has searched census reports, tax reports, records of births, marriages and deaths, court records, archival registers and scarce periodicals; truly a work of love, which is not ended yet. The present book is intended as an intermediate report on a project in progress.

What did it give him back? Much joy, for the study of the life of Howard Staunton proved a fascinating pastime. Many interesting facts were unearthed, but the basic questions about Staunton's early life could not be answered, or in the best cases only tentatively.

The book is a veritable who's who of everyone who crossed Staunton's path or might have done so. Often the mini-bios of these people meander into realms that are far away from Staunton. Here is an example of Townsend's extensive research.

A trial at the Old Bailey

In 1848 a 'venomous attack' on Staunton was published in a pamphlet by a certain Thomas Beeby. Townsend devotes about one page to the content of this vitriolic pamphlet, part of which was also included in Levy's 1975 book, and then gives us a portrait of the evildoer.

We learn the names of the parents of this Thomas Richard Beeby, their professions and where they lived. We learn that after the death of his father William, his mother Mary submitted a petition asking for provision to be made for her and her six children, and some time later was appointed Matron at the same prison where her late husband had been Keeper.

About Thomas Beeby himself we learn that a year before he wrote his pamphlet he had given evidence at the Old Bailey, where a certain Joseph Alexander stood trial. We are told that Alexander, a Polish refugee, had been charged with extortion as early as 1838.

At the trial in 1847, Alexander questioned the witness Beeby. By now we may seem to have left Staunton-land far behind, but in fact the exchange between the defendant and the witness gives us a lot of information about Beeby, who, if the reader has not forgotten this by now, had attacked Staunton in a pamphlet.

After many more details of the trial and its outcome, Townsend comes to speak of Beeby's solicitor, of the whereabouts of his mother Mary after she had retired from her position of Matron at the prison, and those of her unmarried son and daughter. He does not forget to mention that Beeby's publisher was a prominent Quaker.

I find such digressions charming. They reminded me of Laurence Sterne's brilliant and quirky *Tristram Shandy*, in which the protagonist has to wait till volume 3 (out of 9) to get born, and then quickly disappears out of sight.

Candidate Stauntons

Alas, the birth of Howard Staunton remains difficult to pinpoint, even for a sleuth as diligent as Townsend. He is not even quite convinced of 1810 as Staunton's year of birth and cautiously calls it the year generally given. He certainly does not believe Staunton when he gave, at the occasion of his marriage in 1849, the name of his father as William Staunton, Gentleman. His own status in life is also given as Gentleman.

At the time, a 'gentleman', though not clearly defined, was supposed to be someone who was not subject to the ignominy of having to work for his living. Howard himself always posed as a gentleman, even going as far (wrote one contemporary) as to pretend that his family objected to him mixing with chess players and chess divans. In reality he worked very hard to make a living.

Townsend could not find this William Staunton in the records and thinks that he never existed. In fact, he suggests that 'Howard Staunton' may have had three names; his real name, his name as an actor and his name as a chess player – with the rider that although he thinks it likely that the man had indeed been an actor before he became a chess player, he found no proof of it.

So who was he, before he became Howard Staunton? Townsend finds two candidate-Stauntons. One is a certain Charles Stanton (or really a bunch of Charles Stantons who might all qualify). The other is a certain William Humphrey Stanton, who was born in 1811 and disappeared from the official records shortly after his marriage in 1840. One consequence of the identification of William and Howard would be that Howard was a bigamist. The arguments for this identification seem extremely weak to me and Townsend wisely concedes that it is quite speculative and may even prove to be ridiculous. He writes: 'William's signature is in an energetic hand, which, without being recognizable as the famous autograph of Howard Staunton, could be the hand of the same person if allowance is made for the passage of a number of years.' A specimen of William's signature would have been welcome.

A demigod passed away

So Townsend's search for the real Howard Staunton has not come to a convincing conclusion, but on his way to that elusive goal he has sketched a portrait of a fascinating man. A man of great gifts who posed as a gentleman of leisure, while working hard to make ends meet. From the last address where he lived, 29 Elgin Road, he wrote a letter in which he complained of 'a severe attack of (I think) bronchitis attributable to the infernal state of the drainage.' He felt that he was being poisoned by the foul smells from a privy, open all day and night for the convenience of seven people, and from a drain opening, both just below his nose.

Financial circumstances had forced Staunton and his wife to move to this place. Foul smells may have been common in London at the time, but one would have wished for a more dignified last abode for a former chess champion and respected literary scholar.

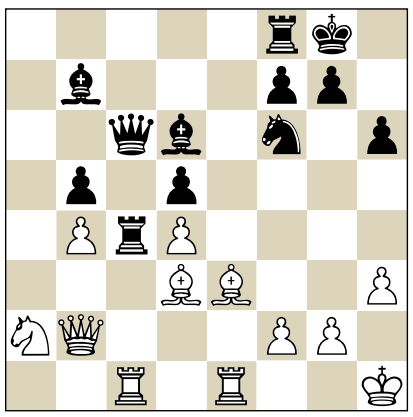
Continually plagued by health problems, he was a man who looked like a lion and could roar like a lion, but who could also be a witty conversationalist and imitator who provided great entertainment for his friends. After his death one obituarist wrote: 'But the race of demigods is fast passing away from the earth, and we have lost one of the last of them in Howard Staunton.'

And now for some chess

But how good was he as a chess player? Keene and Coles call him the English World Champion, granting that this is a bit of an anachronism, as there was no world championship at the time.

After his victory over Saint-Amant, Staunton was called 'the champion', and indeed, why would his contemporaries call him bombastically 'the world champion'? The world that mattered was Europe, or only part of it. Somewhere outside the natives may have been barking, but calling someone a 'World Champion' might have sounded as silly at that time as calling a modern player 'champion of the universe'.

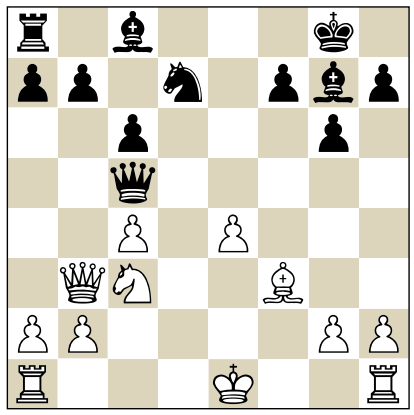
Keene and Coles convincingly show Staunton as a precursor of the hypermodernists of the early 20th century with his thoughtful handling of the fianchetto, often the double fianchetto. But here is a game fragment in which Staunton uses, to paraphrase Fischer, one of the positional concepts that modern players hold so dear. This game was one of the favourites of both authors.



Saint-Amant-Staunton
21st match game Paris 1843
position after 32.♕b2

Every modern player's instinct would be to leave the black rook where it is, but this is because we have become familiar with such positional exchange sacrifices in similar positions. Staunton had to invent it himself. The game went **32...♕d7 33.♔g1 ♘h5 34.♕d2** If ever, this was the right moment to take the rook, with Black's knight far away from d5: 34.♗xc4 dxc4 35.♘c3, with unclear play. **34... f5 35.f4 ♘g3 36.♗xc4** He has to take the rook at some point, but now the circumstances are much less favourable for White than two moves earlier. **36...dxc4 37.♕b2 ♖f6 38.♘c3 ♘e4 39.♖e2 ♖g6 40.♖d1** A mistake that allows Staunton to win back the exchange, leaving him with a large advantage. White's position was very unpleasant anyway. **40...♘xc3 41.♕xc3 ♗f3 42.♖de1 ♗xe2 43.♖xe2 ♕e7** and Black went on to win.

It would take a century before the positional exchange sacrifice became a mainstay of the chess player's arsenal. Here is an example where a top player shows himself completely unaware of its possibilities.



This is Englisch-Tarrasch, Hamburg 1885, after White's 16th move. Tarrasch had not deliberately sacrificed the exchange; he had lost it. Nevertheless he has a fine position. You cannot speak of 'compensation for the exchange'. In fact, White's material advantage comes nowhere near being sufficient compensation for his positional defects.

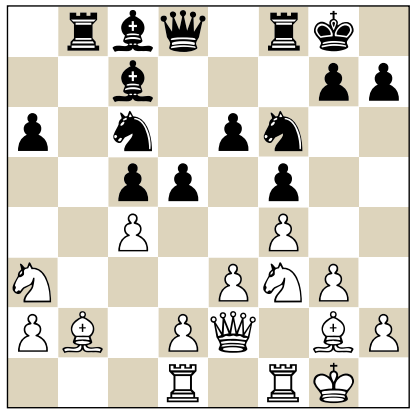
In his fine work *Dreihundert Schachpartien* Tarrasch made it clear that he thought, during the game and when he wrote his annotations, that Black is completely lost in the diagrammed position. And because he thought that Black's position was hopeless, he did indeed lose. Staunton could have told him better, but in 1862, when Tarrasch was born, Staunton had already stopped playing serious chess.

As devious as Larsen

Finally, here is a game from the London international tournament that Keene and Coles consider to be Staunton's most impressive effort. It is understandable that it appealed to Keene, the author of *Flank Games*. He writes that during the 1974 Capablanca Memorial he showed it to several grandmasters and that the most popular guesses were that Gideon Barcza or Bent Larsen had conducted the white pieces.

VO 7.1 – A02
Howard Staunton
Elijah Williams
London 1851

1.f4 e6 2.e3 f5 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♗g2 d5 5.♘f3 c5 6.b3 ♘c6 7.0-0 ♗d6 8.♗b2 0-0 9.♕e2 ♗c7 10.♘a3 Bird's Opening, double fianchetto, knight to a3 – no wonder that Larsen was mentioned as a culprit. **10...a6 11.♖ad1 b5 12.c4 bxc4 13.bxc4 ♖b8**



This looks modern indeed. **14.♗xf6** Without complexes, as the Russians like to say. Keene and Coles give two exclamation marks to the move, but I am not sure that it is really better than the quiet 14.d3. **14...♕xf6 15.cxd5 exd5 16.d4 c4** Would White really be better after 16...cxd4 17.♘xd4 ♖d8? After the text-move Black is lost. **17.♘e5 ♘b4** White's next move would decide after almost any move by Black. **18.♘axc4 dxc4 19.a3 ♗xe5 20.dxe5 ♕f7 21.axb4 ♖xb4 22.♖d6 ♗b7 23.e6 ♕c7 24.♖d7 ♕c8 25.♕d1 ♗c6 26.♗xc6 ♕xc6 27.♕d4 ♖f6 28.♖d6 ♕b5 29.♖d8+ ♖f8 30.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 31.♕d6+ ♔e8 32.♖d1** Black resigned. ■

Jan Timman

Piece sacrifices in the Sicilian

It was pretty big news when Seirawan took up chess again after many years of inactivity. Although I still regard the American as a young player, I could understand the commotion. I also applauded Seirawan's comeback. When you're good at something, you should continue to do it. Too many players have stopped at a relatively young age...

When Botvinnik was nearing 60 years of age, he solemnly announced the end of his active chess career, saying that he had taken this decision too late and that he should have stopped before the Belgrade and Oegstgeest tournaments. Those tournaments had obviously gone badly for him.

This was a man who had only one purpose when playing competitive chess: success. Everything else was secondary. In a way, Kortchnoi may count himself lucky that he never became World Champion; even now, at the age of 80, he is still playing with the greatest possible enjoyment. It seems to me that in order to stay active your primary motive should be enjoyment.

Sometimes you don't know why a player has stopped. After Ljubojevic had won the crown group of former winners in Wijk aan Zee in 2008 he was asked why he played so rarely. 'I don't get any invitations', he replied.

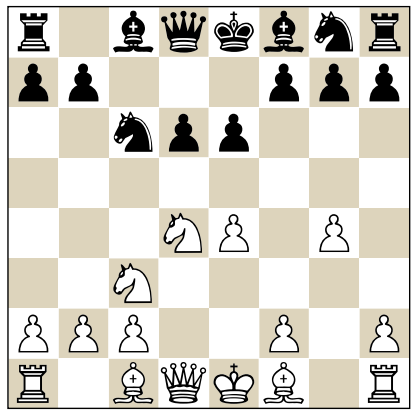
This is indeed an acute problem for all players outside the absolute top. Tournaments are scarce, and if you're not prepared to join the open tournament circus, you are doomed to passivity.

When you play so few tournaments, you have a dilemma: is it really necessary to prepare the opening so thoroughly?

I myself have reached the age at which Botvinnik stopped playing – there's no lack of enjoyment but there are no invitations. This September, when I participated in the InventiChess 2011 tournament in Antwerp, I had not played an invitational tournament for over a year. When you play so few tournaments, you have a dilemma: is it really necessary to prepare the opening so thoroughly? I had concentrated on other things in the past year, particularly the composition of endgame studies. For Antwerp I had made an exception. The pairings had been published a number of months in advance, which left ample time for concrete preparation. I had noticed that, as White, I would in all likelihood get two Sicilian fights on the board. The first one was in Round 3.

SI 39.11 – B45
Jan Timman
Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant
Antwerp 2011 (3)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 d6 6.g4

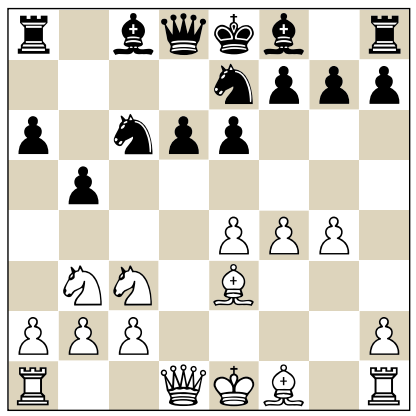


This was first played in the 14th match game Karpov-Kasparov, Moscow 1985. I remember my astonishment when I saw this move for the first time. White plays the Keres Attack despite the fact that the black knight is not on f6.

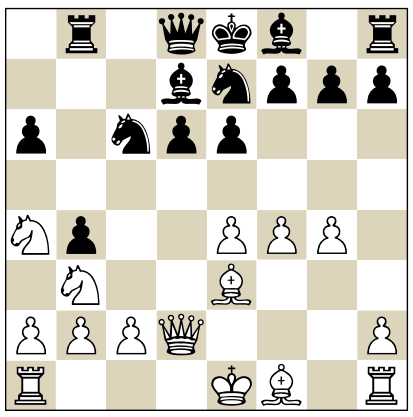
In his book about the match, Kasparov observes: 'Of course the absence of the knight from f6 reduces the effectiveness of White's pawn thrust, but this bold idea deserves serious consideration.'

Practice has shown that the move is no less effective here than in the Keres Attack, since Black cannot solve his opening problems completely by developing the king's knight to e7, as this game, too, will make clear.

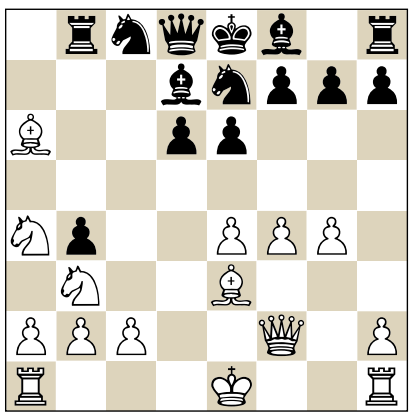
6...♘ge7 7.♗e3 a6 8.♘b3 b5 9.f4



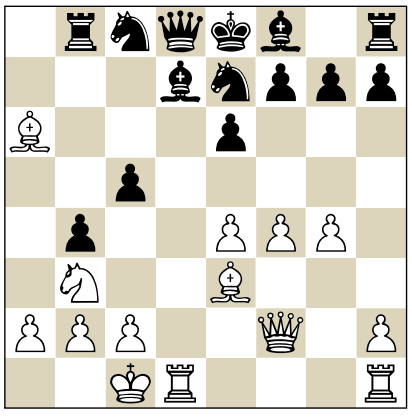
9...b4
This advance is highly uncommon. The normal move is 9...♗b7, while Cheparinov's move 9...♘g6 also deserves attention. Arakhamia had played both in the past. It is always good to see that your opponent is apparently afraid of your preparation.
10.♘a4
The knight is very active here, the only drawback being that it may get into trouble.
10...♖b8 11.♕d2 ♗d7
Consistent. Black tries to exploit the white knight's position on the edge. In Caruana-Van der Heijden, Vlissingen 2007, there followed 11...♘g6 12.0-0-0 ♗e7 13.g5, with a large advantage for White.



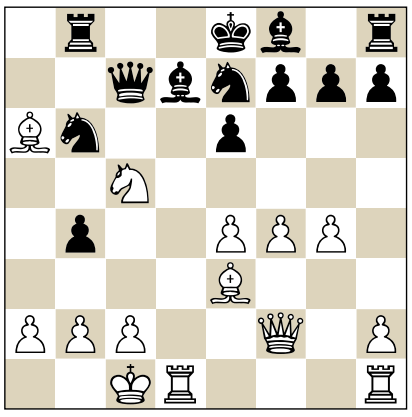
12.♕f2
Preparing a long-term piece sacrifice. The alternative was 12.0-0-0, but I didn't see how exactly to proceed after 12...a5.
12...♘c8 Black must keep control of square b6.
13.♗xa6 The consequence of the previous move. Now Black has to press on.
13...♘6e7 The a4 knight has no squares, but I had calculated this.



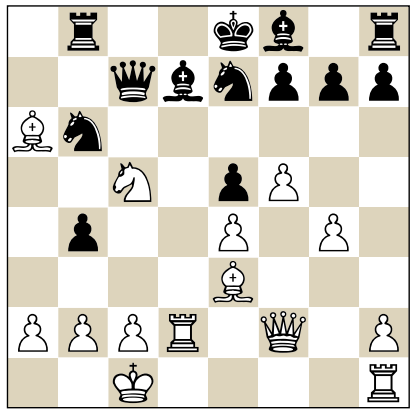
14.♘ac5!
The point.
14...dxc5 15.0-0-0
The situation is hard to assess. In some lines of the Sicilian, White sacrifices a piece for three pawns, but here Black still has her b-pawn. On the other hand, the black kingside is still undeveloped.
The position is hard to play for both sides. Each move counts, and errors will be virtually unavoidable.



15...♕c7
Stronger was 15...♘c6, trying to develop the kingside as quickly as possible – but only if Black is prepared to swap on c5 after 16.♘xc5 and allow a mighty bishop on c5. Arakhamia understandably thought better of this. But this tactic works well for Black after 16...♗xc5 17.♗xc5 b3! 18.cxb3 ♕a5. White cannot really prevent the capture on a2. The play remains sharp. After the sequence 19.♗c4 ♕xa2 20.f5 ♖xb3! 21.♗xb3 ♕xb3 the position is dynamically balanced.
16.♘xc5 ♘b6



17.f5
Not the best move either. It is understandable that White wants to open the position further, but this attempt does not have the desired effect. Very good was 17.♖d2, intending to double rooks on the d-file. The black position is under strong pressure. 17...♘c6 is met very solidly by 18.♗b5, and Black finds herself in an unpleasant pin.
Remarkably enough, the computer initially also indicated the text as the strongest continuation.
17...e5 18.♖d2
My play is torn between two ideas. While doubling rooks would have still been very strong on the previous move, it could now also be a shot in the dark. Initially I had planned 18.f6 here, which is the logical follow-up of the previous move, but I suddenly failed to see how to continue after 18...♘g6 19.♖hf1 ♘f4!. The knight has found a solid foothold and the white initiative is in danger of petering out. 18.♗e2, threatening 19.♘a6, was probably White's best choice, when he has adequate compensation for the piece, but no more. After the text I could have been in slight trouble.



18...♘ec8
A great relief. Arakhamia took a long time to make this passive knight move, and I was increasingly worried about the alternative 18...♘c6.
Afterwards, Arakhamia said that she had been afraid of 19.♗b5, but now that Black has a better grip on square d4, the situation is radically different. After 19...♗xc5! 20.♗xc5 ♘d4 21.♗xd7+ ♘xd7 Black can confidently await future developments. White does get a third

Jan Timman

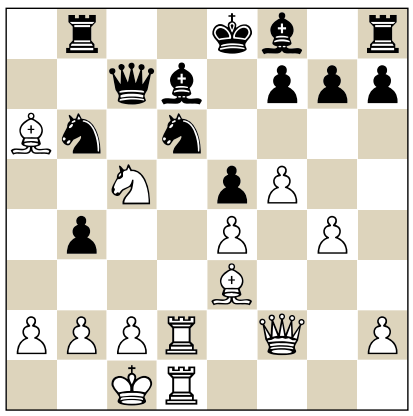
pawn for the piece, but he loses the initiative and Black gets excellent counterplay.

Probably best is the modest 19.♗e2. After 19...♗xc5 20.♗xc5 ♘d4 21.♗xd4 exd4 22.♕g3! White will just manage to maintain the balance.

19.♖hd1

Now everything is hunky-dory again. This is exactly the kind of position I had been aiming for. White is exerting strong pressure on the black position that she will be unable to throw off. The black king is doomed to stay in the middle, under fire from the white pieces.

19...♘d6



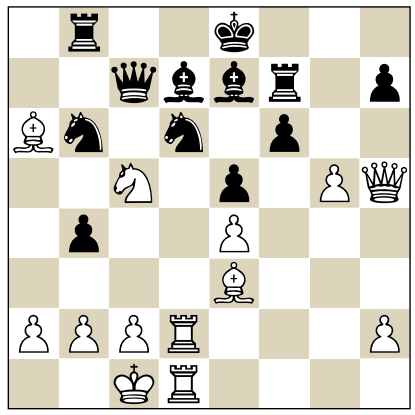
20.f6!

In these circumstances, advancing the f-pawn is very strong.

20...♖g8 21.fxg7 ♗e7 22.♕g3 f6 23.♕h4 ♖xg7 24.♕h5+

Slowly but surely White is making progress.

24...♖f7 25.g5!



Opening the f-file. Black has no more defences.

25...fxg5 26.♖f2 ♗c8 27.♖df1

In a totally winning position you usually don't look for brilliant lines. With the text, White decisively increases the pressure on the black position. Black is unable to defend f7 adequately. But there also was a beautiful win after 27.♖xd6 ♗xd6 28.♗b5+ ♔f8 29.♗d7!!, and Black will soon be mated.

27...♗f8 28.♗b5+

Black resigns. She is forced to take away the cover of the rook on f7.

A spectacular game, but I was not completely satisfied. In the penultimate round I had white against Van der Wiel. A win was mandatory if I wanted to stay in the race for first place (as Romain Edouard also won his last-round game, the French GM kept his half-point lead in the final standings – ed.). And again I managed to make a long-term knight sacrifice early on in the game.

SI 1.2 – B50
Jan Timman
John van der Wiel
Antwerp 2011 (8)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♘c3

An old-fashioned attempt to confuse Najdorf players. Larsen played like this in the 1960s.

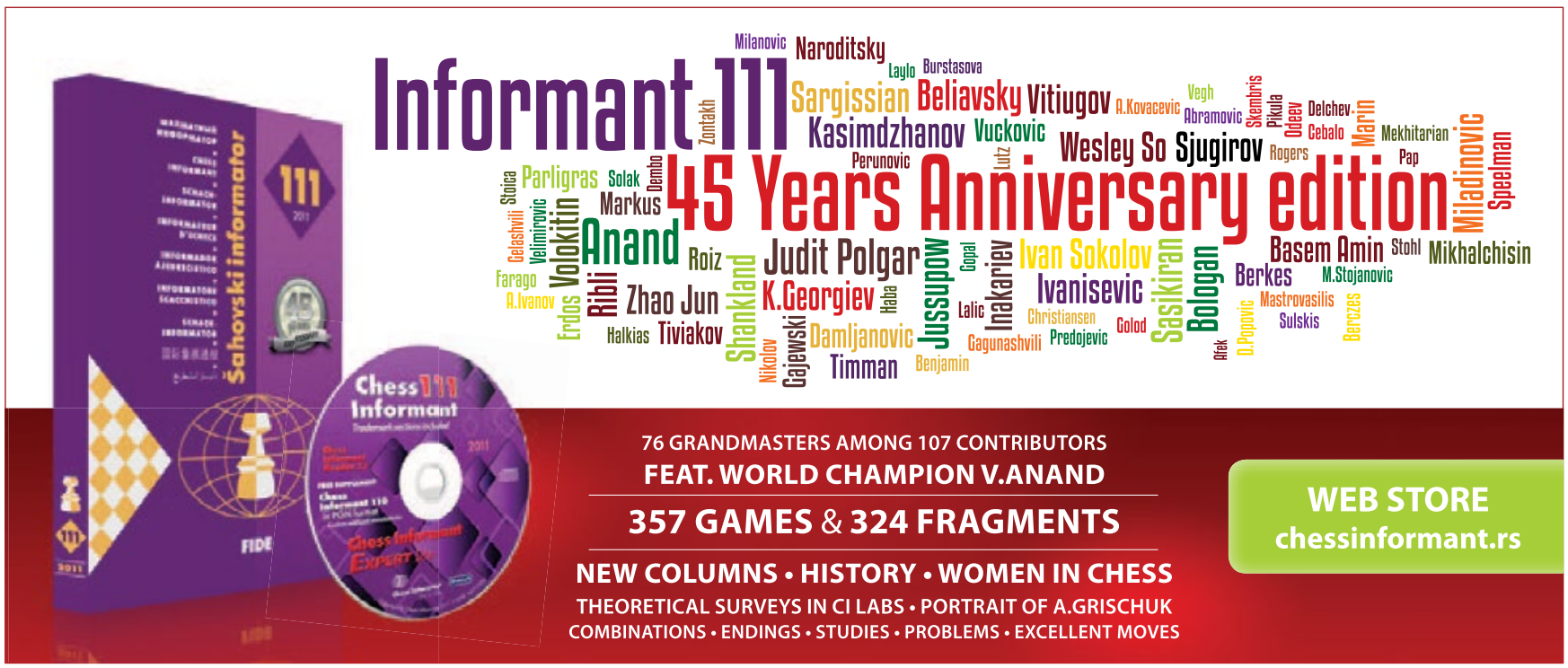
3...a6 4.g3 b5

Several strong grandmasters have played this advance, yet I find it very risky, because it will enable White to aim for an Open Sicilian after all. The most principled move is Fischer's 4...♗g4, and in exchange for the bishop pair Black forces a Closed Sicilian.

5.d4 cxd4 6.♘xd4 ♗b7

If Black wants to chase the white queen's knight, he should do so at once. After 6...b4 7.♘d5 e6 White cannot sacrifice his knight, but must settle for 8.♘xb4, with an opening advantage, e.g. 8...♗b7 9.c3 ♗xe4 10.f3 ♗b7 11.♗d3, with pressure on the black position.

7.♗g2 b4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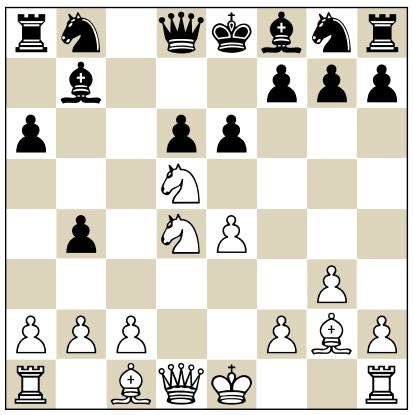
This is incorrect here. This advance may well be Black's decisive error already.

8.♘d5 e6



9.0-0!

This is the problem. White does not need to move the knight. I had studied this sacrifice a few years before and had concluded that Black will have a pretty hard time of it.

9...exd5

Black has little choice. The mighty centralized knight must be captured.

10.exd5

Of all knight sacs in the Sicilian, that on square d5 is the most common. Particularly the Najdorf with 6.♗g5 has quite a few lines in which White plays his knight to d5 with a black pawn already occupying e6. In this version, the sacrifice is exceptionally good for White, mainly because the white king's bishop has been fianchettoed – which makes a knight sortie to c6 a realistic option. Black will find it impossible to take his king to safety and extremely hard even to develop his pieces to decent squares.

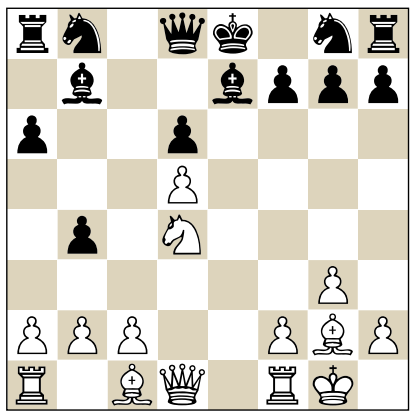
10...♗e7

Via a different move order this position had already occurred in Vallejo-Nepomniachtchi, Pamplona 2008. Instead of the text, Black played 10...♗b7-c8 there, apparently intending to keep the white knight from f5. White played 11.♖e1 ♗e7 12.c4!, after which Black was soon rounded up.

Van der Wiel thought a long time about the text, and it was clear that the position was not to his liking.

'Did you see anything for Black?' he asked me afterwards. I had to tell him no. It is quite possible that the position is already indefensible. This assessment is more or less confirmed by the computer. At this point it regards the position as slightly better for White, but after a few more moves its assessment starts favouring White more and more.

> 'Two long-term piece sacrifices in the Sicilian in one tournament and two points, something I had never managed. This is the way to keep the joy of chess alive.'

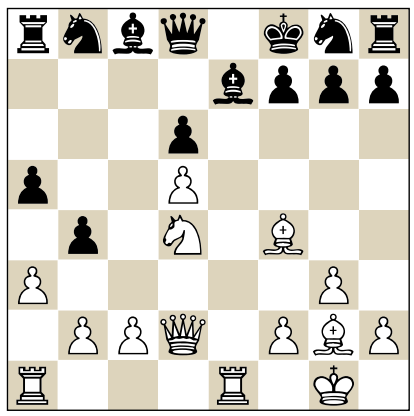


11.♖e1

I played this virtually at once, which is why I hadn't seen the possibility of 11.♘f5. The knight sortie looks very strong, but it doesn't work so well after 11...g6 12.♕d4 ♗f6 13.♖e1+ ♔f8 14.♕xb4 gxf5 15.♕xb7 ♘d7, and Black is still alive.

11...♔f8 12.♗f4 ♗c8 13.♕d2 a5 14.a3

A quiet positional move. Black lacks constructive developing moves, so White takes his time opening a second front on the queenside.



14...♖a6

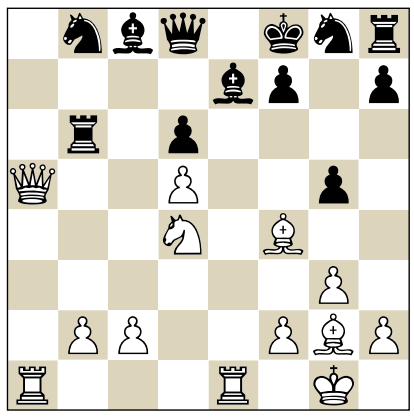
Black sheds a pawn, as 14...bxa3 15.♖xa3 offered him very few prospects. It would allow White to double rooks on the e-file, after which Black's future is gloomy indeed.

15.axb4 axb4 16.♕xb4 ♖b6 17.♕a3 ♖a6 18.♕b4 ♖b6 19.♕a5

After repeating moves once this seemed to me the best way to increase the pressure.

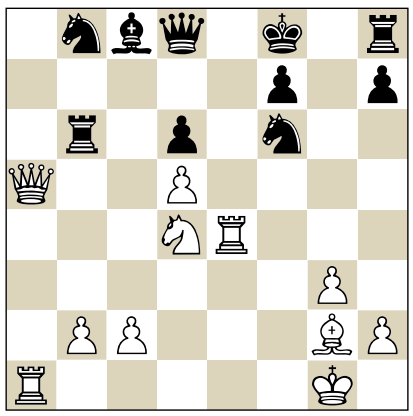
19...g5

Hoping that White would withdraw his bishop, enabling Black to capture on b2.

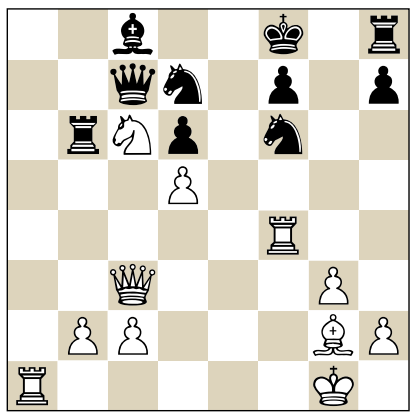


Jan Timman

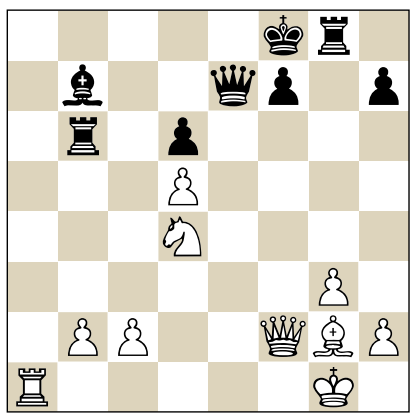
20.♖xe7!
It is a delight to make such moves.
20...gxf4
Black had no choice. After 20...♘xe7 21.♗xg5 his position would soon collapse.
21.♖e4
I had the feeling that 21.♖a7 was even stronger, and the computer confirms this.
Yet I went for the text in order to keep the battle a purely positional one. Black is forced to swap on g3, after which White will be able to launch an attack along the half-open f-file.
21...fxg3 22.fxg3 ♘f6



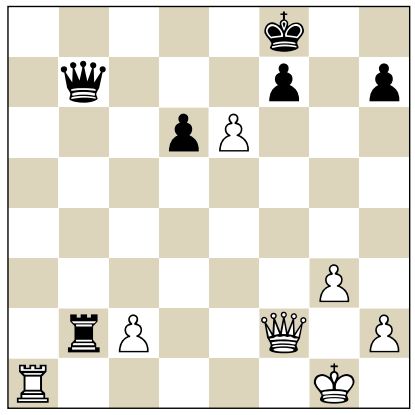
Black has finally managed to develop his king's knight, but he will live to regret it.
23.♖f4 ♘bd7 24.♘c6
The knight has finally landed on this vital square.
24...♕c7 25.♕c3



Continuing to play on both wings. Black will be unable to prevent the capture on f6.
25...♖g8 26.♖xf6 ♘xf6 27.♕xf6 ♗b7 28.♘d4 ♕e7 29.♕f2



The most convincing continuation. The main threat is 30.♖e1.
29...♖g6
In order to meet 30.♖e1 with 30...♖f6.
30.♘e6+ ♖xe6 31.dxe6 ♖xb2 32.♗xb7 ♕xb7



33.♖f1
There's nothing like liquidating to a winning pawn ending, although 33.♖a8+ ♔g7 34.♕d4+ would have given White a mating attack.
33...♖b1 34.♖xb1 ♕xb1+ 35.♔g2 ♕b7+ 36.♔h3 ♕e7 37.♕xf7+ ♕xf7 38.exf7 ♔xf7 39.♔g4 ♔e6 40.♔g5
Black resigns. His king has no time to walk to the c-pawn.

Two long-term piece sacrifices in the Sicilian in one tournament and two points, something I had never managed. This is the way to keep the joy of chess alive. ■

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Garry Kasparov

A Movable Chess Feast

Like Linares before it, the Grand Slam Final discovered the New World this year. Splitting an event between sites is an old tradition in chess, going back to when the first official world championship hopped from city to city in the United States. My 1990 match with Karpov was the first to be split across the ocean. Despite Ilyumzhinov's attempts to host events in ever more remote locations, Internet viewing has yet to replace the impact of seeing the players in person, at least in the eyes of sponsors. So the six participants of the year's highest rated tournament began the event in Sao Paulo and then flew to Bilbao, a lengthy journey.

It is possible that Vasily Ivanchuk's habit of playing constantly all over the world served as special conditioning for the event. Though he eventually faltered, the tireless Vasily was the beating heart of the tournament to the finish. The oldest player in the field could give lessons on fighting spirit, especially considering the criminal assault he suffered in Sao Paulo. His inability to play against Carlsen proved too much to overcome in the end. Even given a third and fourth chance in tiebreaks Ivanchuk was overpowered by Magnus, three more losses close on the heels of another in Romania.

It should be said that the tiebreak match was an absurdity when the players were tied only due to the 3-1-0 scoring system in use in Bilbao.

'I had the opportunity to work extensively with Magnus, and I have been working less formally with Nakamura since the start of this year.'

Carlsen won the tournament with a +2 score and pretending otherwise ignores the traditions of chess. I don't mind a little experimentation and 3-1-0 is far from the worst idea in circulation. But discarding the classical score when it comes to breaking a tie is going too far. At least this time justice was served.

In contrast to Ivanchuk's energy, Vishy Anand, also born in 1969, was barely a shadow in the Grand Slam Final. It looked very much like the Tiger of Madras has become a tame tabby lolling in the Spanish sun. If we discard everyone's results against the outsider Vallejo, Anand sits at the bottom of the crosstable with –2 as befits such a moribund effort. Is he already counting the days until he collects his paycheck for his match against Gelfand? You cannot expect a world champion to win every event, or even most of them. But not to win any? And to all appearances, barely to care? It was one thing for Alexander Khalifman to make a public case for an unexceptional world champion, but this is the great Anand, vanquisher of Kramnik and Topalov, winner of five Wijk aan Zee tournaments and countless others. Such a world champion has obligations and to give less than his best at a prestigious event is disgraceful.

Carlsen's victory paired nicely with Anand's fiasco to highlight the awkward status of the Anand-Gelfand match. The feeble and hasty candidates system implemented by Ilyumzhinov failed to appeal to Carlsen and now the 2012 match looks superfluous. (Karpov's proposal to split the quarters, semis, and finals into separate events would have put the cycle on a more solid footing.) I thought at the time that Magnus should have played in the Candidates' regardless – a potential match with Anand was a worthy encounter. But this FIDE has no ability to organize a top-level event because Ilyumzhinov has 'alienated' the world of commercial sponsorship.

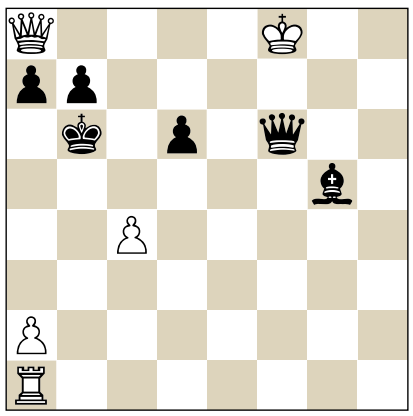
Having no ability of raising funds in the corporate world, Ilyumzhinov has turned on the chess community. The FIDE Executive Board meeting in Krakow in October is considering a list of proposals that will formally turn FIDE into a parasite. The scheme creates or raises fees on organizers and players, squeezing every last penny from the very people they are supposed to serve. Where the Karpov campaign wanted to bring money into chess to promote the game, Ilyumzhinov is taking money away. It's clear that when Ilyumzhinov talked about wanting change he was referring to all the change in your pockets.

Ivanchuk was also playing well at the World Cup in Khanty-Mansiysk. A little good fortune is always required in these events, and for Ivanchuk it came in the form of Emil Sutovsky, who forgot that kamikazes never attend victory celebrations. Needing

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Garry Kasparov defeated Nigel Short 4½-3½ (and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave 1½-½), 'but I cannot say it is entirely enjoyable to play after such long breaks.'

only a draw with the white pieces after winning their first game, Emil played a speculative sacrificial line. Either he forgot his analysis or he decided at the last moment he wanted to win like a genius. When you find your queen on a8 and your king on f8 either you are in serious difficulties or you are setting up the board for a Fischerandom game.

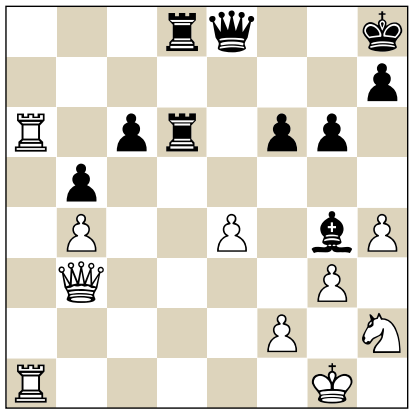


The game reminded me of my last-round game against Adams at Wijk aan Zee 2001, where I went in a full point ahead of Anand. I chose a wild theoretical Catalan and Boris Alterman spoke to me as if I'd gone mad: 'This is how you wanted to make a draw?!' But at least I wasn't sacrificing all my pieces!

Ivanchuk's third place finish put him into the Candidates' cycle, which should have been expected. After all, he was also a Candidate in 1991 and a FIDE KO finalist in 2001, so he is sticking to a strict decennial schedule! With the vigour and quality Ivanchuk has displayed this year, I would not bet against him fighting for a spot in 2021. Kortchnoi still had his peak years ahead of him when he had Ivanchuk's 42 years.

Peter Svidler played the best chess in Khanty-Mansiysk and was the deserving winner. The semifinals had a familiar look to them, with the same players as ten years ago if you swap Anand for Grischuk. Where is the new blood? I played all of these guys well before I retired in 2005! Chess is supposed to be getting younger but of the new generation only Carlsen, Karjakin, and Nakamura have broken through so far. I had the opportunity to work extensively with Magnus, and I have been working less formally with Nakamura since the start of this year. Our relationship started thanks to our mutual friend Rex Sinquefield, patron of the Saint Louis Chess Club and the US Championship. Meanwhile, Karjakin is working with my old trainer and friend Yury Dokhoian, so I still feel a connection with these newest members of the elite.

Hikaru's talent is evident but he still must decide whether chess is more important to him than poker! He played well in Bilbao though he missed several opportunities due to lapses in concentration. In the penultimate round he was a move away from tying for first but after missing that chance he even lost on time against Vallejo.



Vallejo-Nakamura
position after 36.♘h2

Instead of **36...♕xe4**, Black should play 36...♖d1+ 37.♘f1 ♕xe4 38.♖xd1 (38.♕f7 ♗h3 39.♕xf6+ ♔g8 40.f3 ♕e2) 38...♖xd1 (and here 39.♕f7?? is met by 39...♖xf1+) 39.♔h2! ♖xf1 40.♖a8+ ♔g7 41.♖a7+ when 41...♔h6? allows a perpetual with 42.♖xh7+!. But Black has the amazing 41...♗d7!, clearing g4 for the king. 42.♖xd7+ ♔h6 43.♕e3+ ♕xe3 44.fxe3 ♖c1 with good winning chances.

It was something of a shock to find myself at the chessboard a few times in recent weeks. I played a two-game blitz match against Vachier-Lagrave in Clichy as part of a promotion for chess in schools and the presentation of the Kasparov Chess Foundation Europe program at the European Parliament in September. Ironically, the audience considered me the big favourite against the young French champion, but after such a long layoff I did not share their confidence. I managed to win an endgame with some help from my opponent, although I made it more difficult by missing a pretty tactic.

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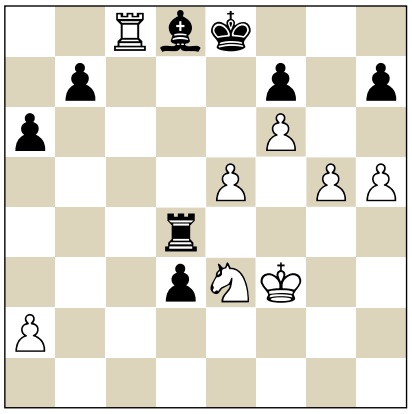
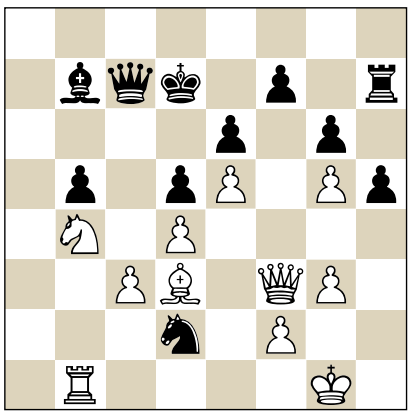


Kasparov-Vachier-Lagrave 2011
position after 47...♔e8

Here I played **48.e6?** and now Black should have good drawing chances after 48...fxe6 49.g6 hxg6 50.hxg6 e5! creating a transit point on f4 for the rook. Black will give up his bishop for the remaining white pawns. After **48...d2? 49.e7** it was back to a clear win. 48.g6 was the correct move: 48...fxg6 49.e6 ♖d6 50.hxg6 hxg6 51.♘f5!! Like in a study the knight gives itself up for nothing but the blockage of the f-file. 51...gxf5 52.e7 and ..♖xf6 doesn't come with check. I forgive a retired player for missing such things in blitz...

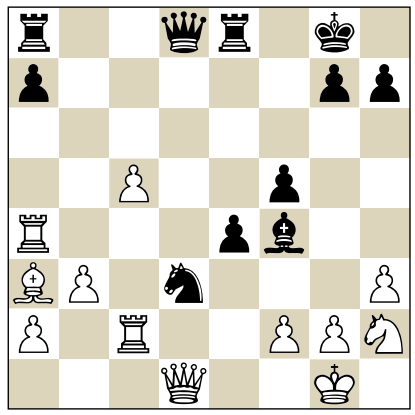
My play there was decent enough to alarm my next opponent, Nigel Short, at least that's what he told me when we met in Leuven a few weeks later for a blitz match. It was organized by the impressive 'Your Next Move' non-profit, which promotes youth chess and has been in operation for five years. My overall play improved in the second half but that's also when I started blundering, losing two in a row after leading by two points. I blundered the exchange in game seven, though there was a missed opportunity that might have turned the tables.



Kasparov-Short 2011 blitz (7)
position after 30...♘d2

White should play 31.♗xb5+ ♔c8 32.♕d3 ♘xb1 33.♕xb1 ♕xc3 34.♘a6!!. A shocking move with the threat of 35.♗d7+. The computer says Black can survive with an unlikely push on the h-file: 34...f5 35.exf6 h4!. A miracle move. Now both 36.♕xg6 ♕e1+ and 36.♕b4 ♕a1+ force repetitions.

After losing two in a row the match was tied going into the final game. I tried to focus my nerves during the little break between games and managed to produce a nice win with a pleasing e-pawn breakthrough.



Short-Kasparov 2011 blitz (8)
position after 24.♖c2

24...e3! 25.f3 and Black exploited his central control with **25...♗g3** and I produced a nice win after **26.♘f1 ♗f2+ 27.♔h1? ♘f4! 28.♕xd8 ♖axd8 29.♖xf4 ♖d1 30.♖e2 ♗g3!** Nigel played ancient openings that brought us back to the 19th century and this seemed a suitably romantic finish to the match. But afterward the machine found a truly Morphy-like move that would have ended the game even sooner. 25...♘b4!! 26.♕xd8 ♖axd8 27.♖xb4 ♖d2! and the game is over.

I was happy to win these little exhibitions but cannot say it is entirely enjoyable to play after such long breaks. Drawing attention to scholastic programs is a great cause, however, and I expect there will be more such opportunities. If we can get chess into more school programs the outlook will be promising for the next generation. Now if only we can stop FIDE from destroying this one. ■

Jacob Aagaard

CURRENT ELO: 2522
DATE OF BIRTH: 31 July 1973
PLACE OF BIRTH: Hørsholm, Denmark
PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Glasgow, Scotland

What is your favourite colour?
Grey. Sounds sad, but is actually deep!?

What kind of food makes you happy?
Vegetables. Chocolate makes me unhappy and fat, but guess what... I make a mean Thai Curry.

And what drink?
Water with a high PH value.

Who is your favourite author?
Only one? Mihail Marin, Jo Nesbø, Jonathan Franzen, Don DeLillo, James Ellroy are great writers.

What was the best or most interesting book you ever read?
The Snowman was fun, *Mao II* and *White Noise* really spoke to me.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
The Lives of Others. Best ending ever.

What is your favourite TV series?
Coupling. But don't tell anyone.

Do you have a favourite actor?
No. I have some favourite directors.

And a favourite actress?
No, I am married and not allowed to.

What music do you like to listen to?
Rap music, of course.

What do you see as your best result ever?
Winning the British Championship (as a player), but as a person it is really having children.

What was the best game you ever played?
Pallesen-Aagaard, Taastrup 2002.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Bent Larsen. He is also my favourite person.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
Grandmaster Repertoire 3 – The English volume one by Mihail Marin. When I got a chapter of 732 Word pages (for his 128-page repertoire book), I invented a now very successful series of books. Volume 10 will soon be out – when finally I join in. Also writing the *Attacking Manuals* was an emotional journey of fear, anxiety and eventual triumph.

What was the most exciting chess game you ever saw?
Wohl-Gipslis, Biel 1996. The combination is only a draw, but from where it starts, on move 16, till move 31, where the game ends, Alex had seen everything (or so he says).

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
Empathy and social skills. Most players are great, some have social problems.

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
Business I would think, except for those with 'typical shortcomings'.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
I have changed my destiny so many times. I will do it once again.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
Søren Dalsberg, John Shaw and Finn Nøhr.

What is your greatest fear?
That anything should happen to my children.

What would you save from your house if it were on fire?
I am not too connected to material possessions, and all files are backed up in digital vaults.

If you could change one thing in the chess world, what would it be?
Play without kings? Or clocks? Or spectators? No, I probably would stop the whining about how poor the situation is, and use those efforts to improve things. I am no Socialist – I don't believe someone else should pay or sort things out. I have organized a lot of things in my time, and made a small contribution. Hopefully more people will do this over time.

What is the stupidest rule in chess?
It has been widely acknowledged now that the draw offer is a bad idea.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
Please take this question of the questionnaire. This has long since been established and does not need a democratic treatment.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
Jacob, how do you actually become a Grand Wizard?

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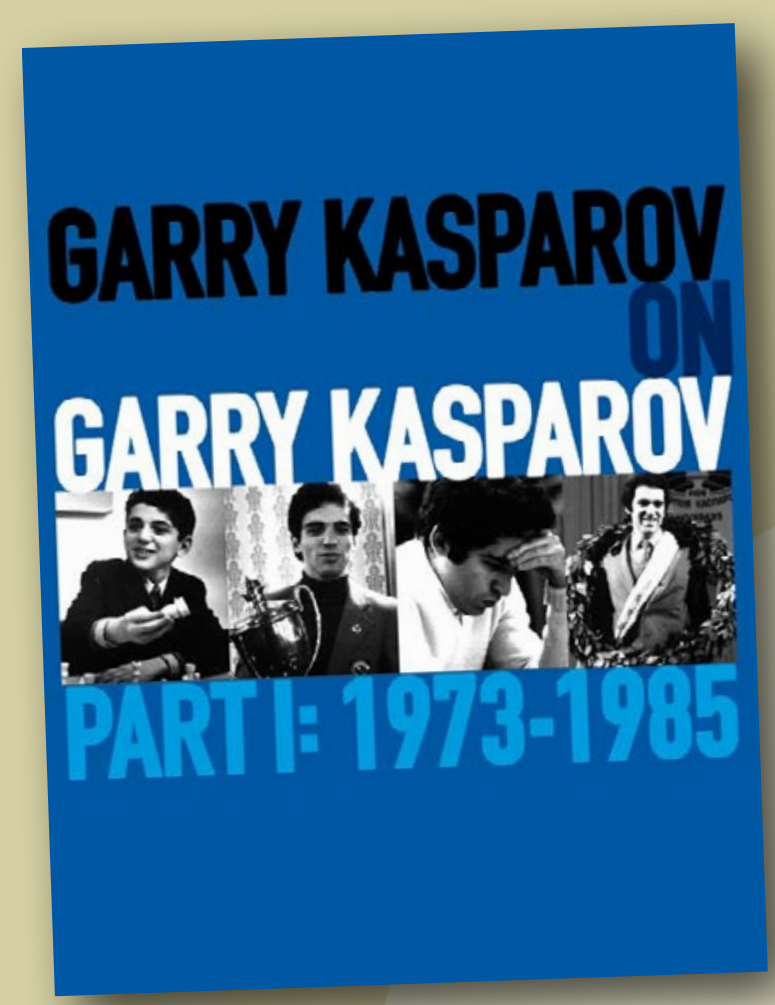

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